

Olga Bychkova,
Center for Science and Technology Studies,
Department of Sociology and Philosophy,
European University at St. Petersburg
6/1A Gagarinskaya Street, 191187 St. Petersburg
Email: obychkova@eu.spb.ru

**Blockchain community as a new governance practice?
Founders' White papers, virtual agoras and cloud public spaces**

In the last years, the Blockchain technologies and principles that gather various communities around them are the most discussable and the least understandable topic of public and academic debate. Blockchain technologies, firstly emerged as anarchistic movement of computer-scientist and crypto-enthusiasts who wants to live in the world of their own financial commons free from the centralized state and market, currently offer possibilities far beyond money transactions. Various communities around Blockchain platforms believe in the underlying foundational ideas inscribed in this technology and the impact it can have on the future society. The model of Blockchain governance is seen as a new way of framing and governing communities of different types. Founders of numerous Blockchain communities claim that this technology will enable a novel mode of self-governance based on the principals of decentralized associations, distributed consensus, networked citizens bounded together by the ethos of mutual trust and everyday participation. In their White papers (a founding document for the community in which the main principles of its operation are listed), democracy is pictured as an ongoing process that doesn't happen only in a voting booth on the selected day every four-six years. The founders dream of a new form of democracy founded on code and software where the active citizenship will be the main virtue, anyone who wants to will be able to organize themselves into voluntary groups and will have as much ability to act as any state or corporation currently does.

In my paper, I aim to examine the ways in which Blockchain technologies promise to produce new models of governance, how these models are justified by founders of Blockchain communities and whether there are similarities of their governance practices with Republicanism. Different scholars have already debated whether Blockchain enables a new form of techno-anarchism, techno-authoritarianism or techno-Republicanism. So, what type of future politics and society are Blockchain communities aimed to build in? To answer this questions, I will go through review of existing studies as well as analysis of the selected founding White papers. I plain to compare two cases both founded back in 2015: one based on principle of off-chain governance – Ethereum (currently one of the most famous open source Blockchain platform created by a Russian-Canadian IT guy, Vitaly Butyrin) and another one governed in on-chain mode - democracy.earth (a Blockchain online voting platform that claims to develop a new form of democracy for post nation-state world).