THE FIVE THINGS WE NEED TO RUN A CREDIBLE ELECTION, AND HOW TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES COULD IMPACT THEM

FRONTIER TECHNOLOGY FUTURES
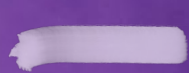
1 AN INFORMED POPULATION

Our beliefs are based on the information and stories we come into contact with in our lives. This includes information which we have control over, (for example deciding which newspaper to buy) what we are surrounded by as a default (like the stories we overhear as children) and our barriers to access (like levels of literacy).

+ Technologies have increased access to information via internet access and are used to increase levels of literacy and education worldwide.

– People are increasingly looking to social media for information, where dis/misinformation is more easily spread and news is often sensationalized.

– Many governments simply shut the internet down to stop the flow of information around elections. There were 155 internet shutdowns in 29 countries in 2021.
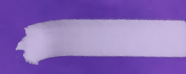
2 CITIZENS WHO ARE ABLE TO MAKE A MEANINGFUL CHOICE

With the information we consume, either by choice or by default, we hope to be able to inform a perspective about what we want and need from society. The choices we make should represent that perspective, through an affinity with a political party, an individual we feel reflects our desires or perhaps a policy which meets our needs.

+ Virtual conversations are untethered from policy consequences and technology can empower debates en-masse.

– AI tools are being used to predict voting trends and spread disinformation through 'deepfakes'.

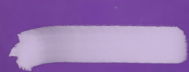**–** Algorithmic manipulation can guide voters to favorable articles and information on particular candidates.

3 A MECHANISM TO CONVEY THOSE CHOICES

The act of voting is one way in which we convey our meaningful choices to those in charge of our countries. It requires an accessible process: information about how to engage with the process, which should take place in an accessible window of time (ie. outside of your working hours) in a location which is easily reached, where you can cast a ballot in privacy.

+ Increased mobile access during elections can build citizen awareness and, as a result, voter turnout

– Censorship and surveillance within tech can be used as tools of digital authoritarianism. At least 24 governments, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, use Chinese surveillance technologies
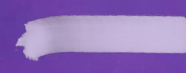
4 AN OUTCOME WHICH IS BROADLY RESPECTED AS A REFLECTION OF THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE

After citizens have been able to cast informed votes which they feel reflect their views and needs, the votes should add up to an outcome which reflects the views of the people as a majority. Votes should be private and cast in safety, with a secure counting process which eliminates the chance for tampering.

+ Blockchain technology embedded into elections may allow for a more transparent process.

– The "trail" that digital media leaves enables people to expose unethical or illegal behavior from leaders or political activists.

– Algorithms serve us content we want to see, trapping us in a 'filter bubble.' This can make it easier to reject outcomes if they don't match your vote.
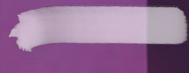
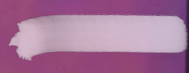## 5 A FEEDBACK LOOP WITHIN THE ELECTION PROCESS

Elections shouldn't be a one-way conversation. It's just as much about listening to citizens as it is about consuming information from candidates. Enabling informed conversations between communities and leaders can lead to greater critical thought and meaning to how votes are cast, and combat misinformation.

+ Mass engagement, facilitated by technology, could rebuild fractured communities and help temper partisan divides.

– Technology has been found to suppress empathy through "information overload."

– China's "Great Firewall" is a widespread censorship system controlled by authorities to filter and control the flow of online content for the Chinese population.

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LET'S VOTE

YOU'VE BEEN ZUCKED

I Voted