

## **Technological Sovereignty: democratising technology and innovation**

Pillar of DiEM25's progressive agenda

### Introduction

It is the right time to collaboratively develop a progressive vision for technological change in Europe and the world. Digitalisation, energy and mobility systems, housing, the future of work, of our health, of freedom, of equality, of our public sphere, of cities, of the environment and of states and democracy – the shape and quality of all of this will be entwined with technological changes.

We live in societies in which technological systems and the ways in which they are shaped and governed are powerful ways to shape society; and technological changes are accelerating. Technology has become a central form of social power and it is urgent to democratise this power. This not only means the need to regulate particular technologies to prevent harm. We also need to seed innovation and unleash their potential for social good. Democratising technology is about finding ways of democratically shaping and governing technologies for the common good.

Technology is political. How, why and by whom are technologies shaped, whose values and interests shape them? Indeed, particular technological capabilities may foster progressive and democratic changes in societies if they are properly embedded in democratic processes and structures.

Democratising technology is about envisioning how we want to live together and with the environment, about envisioning desirable futures and seeing societal and technological changes as closely entwined. This is why DiEM25 includes a pillar on “democratic technologies” within its progressive agenda. This pillar will develop answers to the pressing questions of how technologies can be democratised and how technologies can be used to foster democratisation processes.

In one of the central domains of technological transformation, the Internet, massive changes have taken place. Silicon Valley-inspired forms of platform capitalism have monopolised many digital systems, but the public is becoming aware of the destructive powers of the digital giants. Therefore, for democrats and progressives it is no longer enough to criticise Big Tech – we need to develop narratives and policies that can engender a transformation of digitalisation - as-usual towards digitalisation for the many and the common good. One of DiEM25's rebel cities, Barcelona, for example, is leading the way to reorient their digital infrastructures away from a focus on consumers towards citizens and the sovereignty of the municipality. Many initiatives and organisations have come into existence, that work on digital citizen rights, transparency, data

protection, commons and other aspects for a better governance of digital technologies. There is much that DiEM25 can draw upon and we invite everyone willing to collaborate in shaping a bold and comprehensive progressive vision for the Internet of a democratic future.

The questions that democratic technologies pose do not stop in the digital sphere. Cities, housing, mobility, energy, health, education, agriculture and more are deeply entwined with technologies. It also raises important questions on how to reduce gender inequality rather than perpetuate it in designs and systems.

However, like neoliberalism itself the neoliberal innovation model is broken. It has not been delivering significant innovations that foster for example sustainability, well-being or democracy.

Instead, it has privatised knowledge and research, created parasitic and monopolistic business models and misled the public into an almost religious belief in the capitalism of Silicon Valley and its false hopes of technosolutionism.

Democratising technology is therefore also about finding ways to reorient research and innovation towards the common good, to develop policies that can foster new forms of innovating such as commons, cooperatives and democratic ownership models for data, knowledge and infrastructures. In fact, technology is a cross sectional issue that is relevant in all pillars of DiEM25's progressive agenda and its other aspects such as the European Green New Deal, the future of labour, of a green transition, of transparency, a European constitution for the 21st century of an open, inclusive and democratic society are also relevant for the question of democratising technology. It is also about gender inclusion.

Let's envision progressive and democratic technologies.

The time for bold, inspiring, hopeful and constructive thinking has rarely been better.

The political mainstream is confused by the enormous technological changes that we are living through and the world is waiting for ideas that combine technological, social and political progress.

Share your proposals with us ([Link to progressive agenda](#)) or collaborate with others in the new thematic DSC on "democratic technologies" ([Link](#) or [Email](#)).

Democracy, after all, is about power. Do we allow technology to have power over us, or do we seek to ensure that we, the people, have power over technology? It's not just about the choice between the blue pill or the red pill. It's about defining how many pills there are, and which colour they have.

How to:

For each one of the objectives and sub-objectives listed below, it will be necessary to:

Propose precise, concrete and reasoned measures,

Think in terms of strategy/process of harmonisation and convergence at European level,

Define the measures that can be implemented immediately, in the short, medium and long term,  
as

well as the steps to achieve them, and the transitions

Propose implementation strategies and potential partners/allies,

Identify organisations and/or resource persons who could help us to deal with these issues in  
depth,

Imagine links to other existing DiEM25 policies, e.g. the European Green New Deal

Questions:

### **Democratising technologies**

1. Can you name practices and problems in any technology that you and others see as especially "undemocratic"?
2. What can be done to foster the privacy of European citizens and to protect their data from misuse by private corporations, states and third parties?
3. Which models of data ownership and governance can democratise the production and usage of data? When should data be open?
4. Which regulations can constrain the growing Internet monopolies (Google, Amazon, ...) and make them accountable to democratic decisions? (without creating ridiculous constraints for the small scale and non-profit internet ecosphere)
5. How can alternative economic models such as co-ops and commons projects be fostered in all technology?
6. What alternative models of funding for technologies and innovations should come into existence?
7. Do you know existing examples of the democratic shaping and/or use of any technologies?
8. How can we balance properly the interests of all stakeholders in relation to technology? Those who research it. Those who develop it. Those who make applications for it. Those who employ it. Those who use it. Those who distribute it. Those who pay for it. Those who need it. Those who get damaged by it. Those who are afraid of it.

9. How do we create a story of democratic empowerment with technology, rather than the sterile pro-contra luddite/technofile intellectual trap?
10. How can we make sure women are included and able to fully participate in the process of democratising technologies?

### **Democratising Research and Innovation**

1. Can you name practices and problems in research and innovation that you and others see as especially "undemocratic"?
2. What can be done to reorient research towards the public good and to democratise research and innovation?
3. The European Union is a major funder of research and innovation - what can be done to make the funding processes more democratic and accountable to European citizens and their expectations for research?
4. How can we reform copyright to be compatible with democracy?
5. Who should benefit from the public/commons investment into technology, and how?
6. How can diversity and inclusion in research and innovation be fostered?
7. How to foster inclusive and democratic technological creativity and innovation?
8. Which organisations should be supported because they embody a democratic approach to innovation?
9. Do you know existing examples of democratic research and innovation processes?
10. How do we fix the peer-review system?
11. How do we make sure that the results of research and innovation become beneficial to all stakeholders in society?
12. How do we create a process to identify roadblocks to research and innovation, and then find solutions to remedy those roadblocks?

### **Democratising Infrastructures**

1. Can you name practices and problems in infrastructures that you and others see as especially "undemocratic"?
2. How can infrastructures (energy grid, energy production, mobility, digital, etc.) be democratised and their governance be oriented towards a green transition?
3. How can municipalities gain sovereignty over their infrastructures?
4. Do you know existing examples of the democratic governance of infrastructures?

Other topics

Data democratisation, machine learning and AI for common good.

Tech competition and monopolies - how can the current competition system be leveraged more efficiently?

Tech collaboration and the key role of cities and international collaborations.

Investing in European tech for the public interest.

Procurement rules encouraging free software and supporting local developments.

Future of work and labour laws with the digital transformation.

Tech, Arts and Culture

Tech and European Security

Tech and Democracy

Tech and Public Debate

Copyright Reform / fostering the use of alternative license models (e.g. Creative Commons) by public institutions

How do we identify stakeholders in technological development? Who should get a say (e.g. should users of FB/Google be allowed to negotiate its terms of use? how?)

The role of Intellectual Property in Technology, research and development.