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# Data & Digital Rights

During the last strategy period (May 2014 – October 2018):

**\$48M**

investment capital deployed

**36**

non-profit organisations supported

## What has changed?

Over the previous strategy period, data privacy has come of age as a policy and consumer issue, popular sentiment towards the tech platforms has shifted, and specific harms – disinformation, hate speech, manipulation – are better understood and more prevalent. At the same time, we have seen crackdowns on civic space by authoritarian regimes threatening freedom online. Thus, we continue evolving this area, which expanded from Open Data (2014) to Data Governance (2016), and now to Data & Digital Rights.

Through a combination of tools (e.g., funding for NGOs and universities, direct advocacy, litigation, proofs of concept), we will help to build stronger data and digital infrastructure, giving people a voice in the design of technology and holding accountable those who control it.

## What will we do about it?

### Observation

### > New strategy

Openness and privacy arise from the same impulse for control and agency (e.g., the ability to act independently, freedom of choice)

Move beyond sole focus on open data to data rights (including privacy & AI ethics)

Digital threats to democracy (e.g., cyberattacks, dangerous speech, polarisation) continue across the world and are a feature of nearly every election

Include digital threats to democracy (e.g., dis/misinformation) as a campaign within our Data & Digital Rights impact area, and add a focus on digital rights to our data rights work (e.g., internet shutdowns and encryption)

Data and tech are not neutral; they reflect existing concentrations of power

Support groups that give the public a voice in the ways data and technology are used and affect their lives, and a chance to participate in the design of norms and standards. Advocate to influence policymakers to improve regulation and institutions

The race is on to shape the norms and standards that will underpin the governance of data

## What's next?<sup>1</sup>

### Our goal

We will support people and communities to exercise their human rights in the design and use of data and technology.

#### Hypothesis

If people are given the opportunity to express their voice and articulate their needs, the design and use of data and digital technologies will strengthen their rights and affect their lives in more positive ways.

If the power held by those who control data and tech is better understood and acknowledged, and if smart policy solutions are made available, policymakers will be more willing and able to make meaningful regulatory change.

If we strengthen the institutions that underpin our societies' data and digital infrastructure, we will ensure they are more responsive to people and communities, as well as listened to by policymakers, politicians, and companies.

#### Success

E.g., norms and standards defining the use of data in societies respect and strengthen human rights, and are designed for and by the people.

E.g., growing demand for evidence base and policy alternatives; governments' adoption of the policy proposals drafted by our grantees.

E.g., creation of institutions and norms that are resilient through political change; orgs we support become anchor institutions in the field.

#### Disconfirm

E.g., people exercise their voice but institutions do not respond, and thus they become less likely to engage in the future.

E.g., policies enacted in Europe are not followed elsewhere; companies ignore regulation, pay fines, and go on with business as usual.

E.g., institutions are neither resilient nor representative of people's interests; anchor institutions fail to scale sustainably and eventually collapse.

<sup>1</sup> For each impact area, we have listed our working hypotheses, which inform our investment decisions, as well as examples of what evidence might lead us to believe our theory of change is on track ("success") and examples of what evidence or occurrences might lead us to believe we were wrong and should change course ("disconfirmation").