

# UCL submission to the Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy

UCL POLICY SUBMISSION  
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There are a number of pitfalls around manipulation online, such as the large-scale manipulation of opinion ('astro-turfing', where paid reviewers masquerade as ordinary citizens providing online 'opinions'), and the steering of people's behaviour by particular... need to be alert to these possibilities. In the case of e-voting, voting ordinary citizens, in order to ensure trust in the system.

## Accuracy of data and accessibility of content

There is an inherent trade-off between access to data and the accuracy of data because assumptions are made about what people would find useful when publishing content. There are, however, examples from NGOs in different countries who have managed this successfully, a perfect neutrality of data, but ensuring transparency in how it is

Furthermore, it is also important to maintain transparency in the role of data (generated by people's actions) for digital democracy. B Da a ca a 2012 Obama election campaign to create complex profiles of localities and of individual voters' attitudinal beliefs, core values and concerns. However, targeting voters in this way without public consultation is problematic. Focusing data use policies on questions of importance - where data is from, how data is used and what the ownership of

## Ensuring realistic expectations

If more people use social media to get engaged in politics, there achieved and thus causing frustration. It is important to distinguish between using digital participation to enable citizens to have a chosen delegates. However, the Estonian Parliament then dismissed of a decision-maker 'champion' who could build on the exercise. Overall, despite a promising start, this was a poor experience in

## Exploiting existing digital technologies

The House of Commons does and they mean that the environment people participate has changed. It is important that democratic

more effective than creating new digital tools or platforms which and through social media) are already occurring. The House necessarily possible to ensure that these are fully democratic, nor should they be ignored as platforms for engagement. Rather, it is important to adopt a multi-pronged strategy. However, this should not simply be a case of 'piggybacking' onto other platforms - there conducted, including of how the House of Commons and elected representatives can respond to (as well as initiate) engagement

W digital routes, it shouldn't be mandatory to engage with platforms no democratic function. It is important to have transparency over the rules of engagement on different digital platforms. It is also important to understand the varied purposes of different types of

## Successful digital tools for engagement

S ca b the House of Commons) has proved to be popular and in some cases a significant proportion of people come to the petitions platform looking for something to sign, suggesting an existing commitment to activism. Half of all signatories come from Facebook to a specific petition but then go to the homepage to of a successful e-petitions platform: once the 'We the People' site engage in other ways. However, it is important to recognise the do involve only a binary choice (to sign or not sign). They do not or nuanced engagement or participation. Additionally, decision-makers are not actively involved at this stage, so their impact can be limited, although there is scope for decision-makers to become

