



Democracy 2.0

Alternative and Emerging Futures

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For: Sitra Fund

Socrates: If you were heading out on a journey by sea, who would you ideally want deciding who was in charge of the vessel? Just anyone or people educated in the rules and demands of seafaring?

Adeimantus: The latter, of course.

Socrates: So why then do we keep thinking that any old person should be fit to judge who should be a ruler of a country?

-Plato's The Republic

What is Democracy?

- “Power of the people”
- A system of governance
- Elected leadership and officials that represent the population
- Peaceful and orderly transition of power
- Western construct and export

What Democracy Isn't

- A system that privileges individuals over the collective
- Leaders and officials for the few, not many
- Serving the economy over all other aspects of society
- Global system, informed by global perspectives
- Capitalism

The people who are in our pay and whose job it is to adjudicate amongst all the evidence and make policies that are good for all of us, are terminally compromised by inequality.

-Cory Doctorow, FITC 2019

Current State

- The pandemic continues
- Distrust of institutions
- Disconnect in values
- Systems are complex and fragile
- Environmental degradation
- Ignorance is a disease

Current State part 2

- Late-stage capitalism
- Rich are getting richer
- Metaverse is emerging
- Policy lags
- Desire for change

Why is Democracy Precarious?

- Unconsidered factors and impacts
- Chaos is easier than order
- Four year election cycles
- Plenty of signals of hope without the right conditions
- Someone benefits from the problems

A surreal illustration featuring a person surfing on a wave. The wave is depicted as a large, open book with pages that have a textured, wavy appearance. The surfer is a person with long, flowing hair, wearing a light-colored, possibly metallic or reflective, outfit. They are riding a surfboard on a crest of the wave. The background is dark and atmospheric, with some light reflecting off the pages of the book and the surfer's outfit. The overall mood is dreamlike and imaginative.

Scenarios





Signals



Scenarios



Strategies



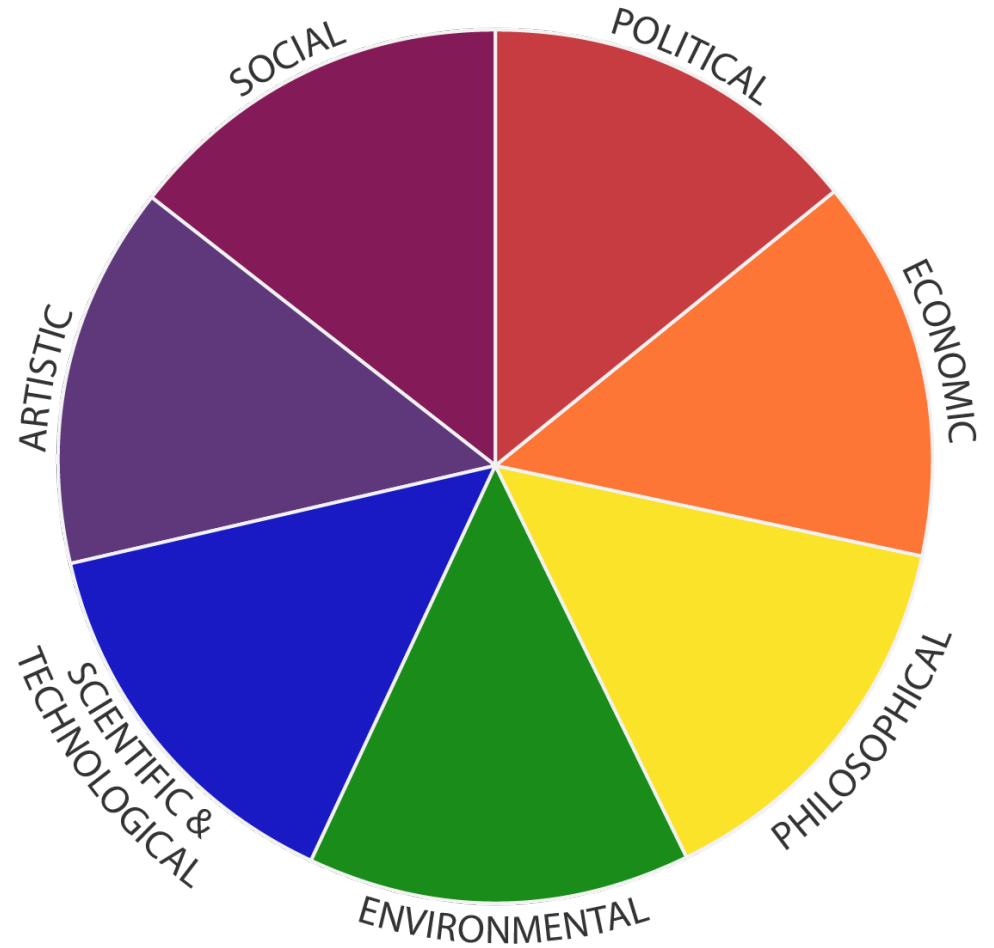
Purpose of Scenarios

- Provoke new questions
- Challenge assumptions
- Consider alternatives
- Extract strategy

Min Spec for Future-Proofing

1. Environmental sustainability
2. Justice, **democracy**, equality
3. Ethical AI and algorithms

Seven Foundations



A digital illustration of a futuristic city street. In the foreground, a group of people in dark, hooded coats are walking away from the viewer across a crosswalk. Their backs are to the camera, and some have glowing green rectangular frames on their backs, suggesting digital tracking or identification. The background features a cityscape with buildings and a large, glowing blue pedestrian signal on the left. Various digital overlays, including data screens and glowing lines, are scattered throughout the scene, creating a high-tech, cybernetic atmosphere. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, greys, and greens, with some red highlights on the digital elements.

Continuation: Meta-Democracy

Current State

- NFT gold rush for the privileged
- Big tech eyes the Metaverse
- Artist experimentation

Meta-Democracy

A new Wild West emerges from the instability of the pandemic. Creatives and coders lead the vanguard into the Metaverse. The digital and blended worlds move increasingly beyond the reach of governments. Whoever owns the code and engines that fuel them, owns the new world.

While some wealth is redistributed, it is the predominantly the wealthy who continue to thrive in the Metaverse. Lower classes are left behind with little to no virtual ownership. Informal, creative, digital gig economies thrive in the absence of regulation, along with opportunities to abuse systems and people.

Like the dark web before it, a dark metaverse emerges with new threats.

Continuation: Meta-Democracy

Political: Corporations form pseudo constitutional monarchies, lawful loopholes, jurisdiction battles, virtual citizenship

Economic: Hyper creative/gig economy, digital work with robodoping

Social: New social structures based on digital identities, status symbols, and classes, new “-isms”

Strategy Considerations

- Who is building the Metaverse and for whom?
- If it can be commoditized, it will be commoditized
- Policymakers are not prepared for the emerging world



Discipline: DIY Democracy



Current State

- Tik Tok teens hijack Trump's rally
- BTS fans take over problematic hashtags + surveillance apps
- Texas abortion law

DIY Democracy

As youth and progressive populations become increasingly frustrated by a lack of true representation, they begin to take matters into their own hands. The world doesn't resemble the future they imagined. Armed with the tools of digital natives, these DIYers manipulate data set, deceive political campaigns, and subvert the online actions of politicians.

Youth use virtual spaces to design and launch counter campaigns, select and micro-fund their own candidates, and set their social priorities. They find ways to redirect, confuse, and misinform older, more conservative voters to prevent them from reaching the polls.

In response to pressure, algorithms are used to design and disseminate more youth-friendly political personas. This includes the early detection and curation of "high-potential" political figures.

Discipline: DIY Democracy

Political: Young Progressive Party, youth-driven counter politics, “high-potential” political personas

Economic: Accelerated crypto as a political tool (to displace older generations and established power), pre-teen creators/entrepreneurs, youth-led DAOs

Science & Tech: Social platforms, Roblox, anti-surveillance tech

Strategy Considerations

- There is a progressive playbook
- Who decides the future is disconnected from who inherits the future
- Alternative forms of representation



Collapse: Disinformed Democracy



Current State

- Increase in misinformation and disinformation
- Mainstream use of synthetic media
- Predatory AI

Disinformed Democracy

As we near the end of truth, stories reign supreme. Lies spread as quickly as the wildfires ravaging the Earth and the viruses ripping through our bodies. Denial of reality is the dominant coping mechanism.

Politicians become the world's best advertisers as disasters force us indoors. Designer DeepFakes and advanced synthetic media allow each politician to deliver tailored yet conflicting messages to different sets of voters, appealing directly to them and their issues. There is no accountability or fact checking when every reality is simultaneously true and untrue. Dictators thrive. Democracy becomes a meaningless word that can be used to describe any form of leadership.

Without objective truth, we no longer have a sense of shared reality. No one knows what is real anymore.

Collapse: Disinformed Democracy

Political: Tailored politicians with multiple personalities, designer dictators, oligarchies, interactive and appeasing Big Brother

Economic: Oligopolies and monopolies, constrained, undesirable degrowth

Philosophical: Disinformation runs rampant, end of truth, reality is a multiversal construct, hyper-personalization, identity crises, lack of transparency, public gathering as mechanism of truth



Strategy Considerations

- Policy for creative and subversive use of synthetics
- Role of public education
- Rethinking the role of politicians



Transformation: Distributed Democracy



Current State

- Blockchain used for government services
- Accelerated uptake of gaming worlds
- Unreal engine

Distributed Democracy

Blockchain transforms governance when it's combined with gaming worlds. With access to so much of a nation's population, decision-making is decentralized.

Prospective voters obtain licenses to vote on issues like budget allocation and societal priorities. Voting is an acquired skill. Gaming worlds and real-time rendering allow voters to experience the consequence of their decisions before any ballots are cast. Should society invest more in healthcare or education? What is the effect of one policy over another? Each time an issue requires a decision, we draw from a large body of qualified voters to make collective decisions.

Politicians do not make decisions for us. They implement what we decide.

Transformation: Distributed Democracy

Political: Dissolution of political parties, policy experimentation and emergence

Economic: Societal wealth allocated by society, more sovereign funds

Philosophical: Collective wisdom, distributed responsibility, higher emphasis on voter manipulative

Strategy Considerations

- Redesigning the role of politicians
- Separating long-term societal issues from election cycles
- The role and use of gaming worlds

Never let a good crisis go to waste.

- Winston Churchill

Thank You!

Images By: Tithi Luadthong

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Continuation: Meta-Democracy

Political: Corporations form pseudo constitutional monarchies, governments fall further behind tech companies, lawful loopholes, jurisdiction battles, virtual citizenship

Economic: Coder and creative classes, unregulated emerging markets, easy to hide crypto, new B2B/B2C/C2C agreements, rise of DAOs, hyper creative/gig economy, digital work with robodoping, new black markets, NFT everything

Philosophical: Escape from deteriorating reality, easy to manipulate perceptions, masked/designed identities and skins

Environmental: Greater energy demands, more sustainable innovations, simulated environments, extended environments, new spatial realities (e.g. worlds without gravity)

Science & Tech: Policy experimentation environments, digital twins, biased algorithms, Unreal Engine, gaming worlds, IoT

Art: 4D algorithmic art, nouveau cyberpunk, hyperexpression through avatars, new art forms e.g. musical instruments not dependent on gravity

Social: Digital inequalities, faltering systems, new social structures based on digital identities, status symbols, and classes, new “-isms”, gamified lives

Discipline: DIY Democracy

Political: Young Progressive Party, youth-driven counter politics, young political influencers, “high-potential” political personas, designer politicians, anti-establishment efforts, Tik Tok campaigns

Economic: Micro-funding models, youth-designed funding models, accelerated crypto as a political tool (to displace older generations and established power), pre-teen creators/entrepreneurs, youth-led DAOs

Philosophical: Progressive alternative facts, rebellious natures, radical progressive values, fight for the future

Environmental: Increased environmentalism, digital worlds for social progression

Science & Tech: Social platforms, Roblox, designer algorithms, advanced filtering, anti-surveillance tech

Art: Digital protest art, hashtag crafting, cyberpunk fighting for solarpunk

Social: Activated and rightfully angry youth, growing generational divides, informal organizations, increase activism



Collapse: Disinformed Democracy

Political: Tailored politicians with multiple personalities, designer dictators, oligarchies, interactive and appeasing Big Brother

Economic: Oligopolies and monopolies, constrained, undesirable degrowth

Philosophical: Disinformation runs rampant, end of truth, reality is a multiversal construct, hyper-personalization, identity crises, lack of transparency, public gathering as mechanism of truth

Environmental: Decaying Earth, extreme end of climate models

Science & Tech: DeepFakes, synthetic media, Stagecraft

Art: Co-opting of arts to spread disinformation, “Double-speak”

Social: Rich or poor, no middle class, simultaneous social cohesion and fragmentation, new forms of “othering”

Transformation: Decentralized Democracy

Political: Licensed voters on issues, true civil servants, politicians chosen based on ability to execute voter decisions, dissolution of political parties, policy experimentation and emergence

Economic: Societal wealth allocated by society, more sovereign funds and nationalized services, higher taxes, elimination of lobbying with attempts at micro-lobbying/digital targeting, tax reallocation, no more raising funds for campaigns

Philosophical: Collective wisdom, distributed responsibility, empathy building, no more identity based politics, issues first vs ego first, transparency, accountability, higher emphasis on voter manipulative

Environmental: Higher energy demands offset by at home solar and geothermal solutions, higher investments in combating climate change

Science & Tech: Blockchain, gaming worlds, Unreal engine for futures and training, hyper UX/UI design, Metaverse for good

Art: Collective future experiences, more strategic art and stories, immersive/interactive/multi-sensory worlds

Social: Connected systems, higher social cohesion through empathy building, potential new 'voter class' and/or status symbols, cross-cultural knowledge sharing in gaming worlds