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EUROPEAN TECHNOLOGY FORUM 4 SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

PANEL 5 – CIVICTECH & SOCIETAL IMPACT

Which model for which impact on Society?

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SUMMARY

The panel was part of the European Technology Forum 4 Sustainable Democracy Conference, which brought together key figures from civil society and technology to raise awareness of democracy's long-term viability and encourage civic involvement through Technology. Moderated by **Dr. Pranjul Shah**, Head of the *University of Luxembourg Incubator*, the roundtable was full of heated and intriguing debates with **Nick Flynn**, Head of Legal at *Awaaz.org* in United Kingdom, **Artur Aboeuf**, Co-founder of *Time for the Planet* in France, **Tomas Rakos**, Co-founder of *Participation Factory* in Czech Republic, **Krzysztof Izdebski**, Expert at the Stefan Batory Foundation & Board member of the *Consul Democracy Foundation* in Poland, **Jane Klepa**, Founder & Executive Director of *1991 Open Data Incubator* in Ukraine.

The different ideas developed by its speakers were centered around four impacts. They started by defining societal impact and CivicTech. It has been mentioned that a CivicTech is a set of community engagement platforms that can help to promote civic participation, improve trust between communities and governments, and collect data to assist the actions to have a greater impact. There's a significant potential to review a project's performance and outcomes, enhance future processes, and operate more efficiently when it comes to ethical projects and when you optimize social impact data use. The influence of an action on a community, which is usually focused at bringing good change by improving outcomes and processes in the broad Society, is known as social impact. Without a doubt, Civic Tech is an interesting alternative and have great potential to obtain a positive societal influence in communities all over the world.

Considering multiple impact streams, it may seem self-evident, but understanding that influence can be subjective and, in this way, does not mean the same thing in every city, initiative, or platform. It is important to consider not only the purpose for your individual project, but also the process when setting your objectives. When running an engagement platform for a school district's participatory budgeting process, for example, you're probably most concerned about the impact budget allocations will have. In sum, impact goals cannot exist in isolation.

Data collecting can be done in a more transparent manner. The panelists highlighted the importance to question the Tech-tools suggested: "Do I have everything I need, and do I need all I have?" when gathering data from your community. Although it may be tempting to collect as much data as possible through your platform, where it is better to avoid collecting data that isn't required to accomplish results or effects. The use of impact-driven data insights is on purpose. When there is too much data to sort through, it's easy to lose sight of what it is attempting to do and measure.

There's a lot more to assessing civic engagement than counting clicks, without missing out the "civic" in Civic Tech in case of quantitative measurements. Because civic technology has a social impact, it is crucial to think about what kind of metrics would be the most useful to track. The number of participants, votes, or visits are examples of quantitative indicators, often known as observable metrics. While these figures can be useful in predicting a project's immediate success, they aren't always indicative of its long-term influence. The speakers recommended to embed the engagement into the platform: who take part of it, and how did they do it? It's critical to integrate measurements and qualitative data, which is frequently referred to as "invisible influence," and examines consequences that are difficult to quantify.

CONCLUSIONS

The general conclusions resulting from the discussion are the following:

- Through CivicTechs, data collecting becomes more deliberate, and chances for improvement become more obvious. CivicTech tools have good potential to have a significant impact on society and democracy's long-term viability. Proven by the different experiences explained by the panelists, the use of technology contributes to develop transparency, new forms of collaborative governance and, thus, aims at reinforcing trust between the different actors of the Society, especially in the public sector.