A Voter’s Guide:
Data-Driven Political Influence
Section 1:
Introductions to the workshop: personal data, politics, and each other
Welcome!
The Influence Industry Project by Tactical Tech

- Tactical Tech is an international NGO based in Berlin that looks at the intersection of technology and culture.

- The Influence Industry project supports researchers, journalists and civic society to deepen public knowledge about digital influence and the surrounding industry.
Agenda

Section 1: Introduction to Data-Driven Politics
Section 2: Political Communications and Influence
Section 3: The Influence Industry and Data-Driven Political Campaigns

Break

Section 4: Behind Influence: Data as a Political Asset and as Political Intelligence
Section 5: Why Does Data-driven Influence Matter to Us?
Section 6: What Can We Do?
Ground Rules and Shared Values

We share responsibility for our experience

We take the time to help one another learn

We are here to give as well as to gain

Step up and Step Back

We all take part, and contribute, in different ways

We are open to reflect, open to do doing things differently, and work through challenges
Discussion:
What does political engagement mean to you?
What are other types of political engagement besides voting?
Activity:
Portraits and Data Doubles
What is data?

Data does not have one single definition

Data can represent:
• an individual or a group,
• anonymised or identifiable,
• something you did in the past or what you might possibly do in the future
What is data?

We will be using a broad definition:

Personal data is a representation of any aspect of a person or group of people which can be recorded in a digital database.
How’s data created?

- Data you create
- Data that others create about you
- Data that is inferred about you
Political groups and private companies collect data from various places into their databases.
Section 2:
Political Communications and Influence
Discussion:

What political ads or other content, such as SMS, emails or TV interviews, have you seen that you still remember?

What was memorable about the content?
Discussion:

What is political influence during an election campaign?
Influence

The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself.
Influencing
Motivating
Persuading
Manipulating
Informing
What does political influence look like?

Political influence has relied on different technologies as each becomes available:

- Radio
- TV
- Email
- Social Media
Political Party

Social Media

Hybrid Media System

Traditional Media

Citizens
Activity:
Political appearances: What does good look like?
What does political influence look like?

Political communications can be informative but are also designed to tell a cohesive story about their values.
Political narratives can be stories politicians tell in a positive light for themselves.

Political narratives can be stories politicians tell to put their opponents in a negative light.
Section 3:
The Influence Industry,
Influence and Data-Driven Political Campaigning
Data driven campaigning is a term used to describe political messages which are strategically tailored and placed based on voter data.
Political parties use data as the basis for making decisions about how to carry out a political campaign including:

- which messages to share with the public,
- who to advertise them to,
- and how to personalise the message to specific profiles.
What do you know about Cambridge Analytica?
Cambridge Analytica

Data analysis firm

In 2018, a whistleblower exposed that Cambridge Analytica had been collecting personal data from millions of Facebook users without their consent.

Cambridge Analytica used data to support political influence in campaigns around the world.
Political Influence Industry

There are many private companies involved in advising and support data-driven election campaigns - this is what we refer to as the Influence Industry.
Political Party → Data Trails ← The Influence Industry: 500+ consultants, advertisers and data brokers → ← Traditional Media
Social Media → Citizens
Data is used by these political parties to generate influence for political parties: the political advertisement that you see on social media or on a website, it’s the **phrasing of the email** that a political campaign sends you, it’s how the political billboard looks and it can even be the **actions** that a politician takes during a campaign.
Data Technologies

Data as a Political Asset

Data as Political Influence

Data as Political Intelligence
Break
Section 4: 

Behind Influence: Data as a Political Asset and Intelligence
Data as a Political Asset

Valuable sets of data on any citizen can be amassed and sold, shared or otherwise exchanged between political candidates, campaigns, and data brokers.

These data sets are assets to the political campaigns.
Data as Political Intelligence

Data is accumulated and interpreted by political campaigns to learn about voters' political preferences and to inform campaign strategies and priorities, including generating profiles from the datasets acquired and testing political messaging.
Profiling themselves

“Metrics” are provided by platforms such as Google or Facebook which show the political parties how many people are liking their content, sharing it with others, opening their emails, and clicking links through to their website.
Profiling themselves

**A/B testing:** measuring responses to different images and messages, as well as the time they send the message or channel they use to send it on, to see what gets the most responses and what is less successful
Profiling voters

Political parties and groups can use the massive amounts of data that they collected or purchased to create “insights” or profiles of different individual voters or voter types.
Activity:
The OCEAN tool
Psychometric profiling uses popular science methods to categorise people.

Demographic profiles are created using information like people's gender, religion, ethnicity, where they live, income, and number of family members.

Opinion profiles represent groups based on their opinions such as groups who support or oppose a certain legislation or who are for or against certain political movements.

Behavioural profiles represent people based on the trends of their behaviours such as how often they shop, or what content they usually read on a website, or what time of day they read their emails.
Activity:

In their shoes: influencing profiles
Profiling

Did any of these types of profiling feel more or less accurate?

Did any of these types of profiling feel more or less creepy?
Section 5:
Why does data-driven campaigning and the influence industry matter?
Same practices, new techniques

Enterprises and political groups have long paid attention to consumer habits, polling and which demographics are likely to vote for them.

What is new is the volume, detail and scale of these practices. Digital technologies have super-charged the practices.
Concerns

Accuracy: data can tell one part of a person's story but not the entirety

Hidden: many people don't know about the data collected about them

Bias: biases that exist in the real world also exist in the digital world

Polarisation: private companies focused on profit will be more interested in controversial content producing the most clicks and shares, rather than political participation that helps voters.
Dilemmas

Which of the dilemmas from today's discussion have stuck out to you?

Do you have other dilemmas that came to you?

Or do you have responses to the dilemmas?
Activity:

What gives an image meaning?
Discussion:

What do you think about political ads and images now that you understand how they work?

What emotions has today’s session brought up for you so far?
Section 6:

What we can do and what comes next?
What does activism look like to you?

What could next steps look like for you?
Digital actions

- Review your social media privacy settings
- Ad blocker extensions on your browsers
- Other privacy centered extensions on your browsers
- Alternative to popular apps
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7 Tips to Detox Your Data

datadetoxkit.org/en/privacy/voting/
Other actions

• Ask a friend about the last ad that they saw, what did they think about it?

• Next time you see an ad, look for the influence clues

• If an ad seems interesting, follow up on the claims
Activity:
Reflection as political action
Thank you!

To learn more about these topics, check out: https://influenceindustry.org