

## Digital democracy & Covid-19

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From: Jim Killock | Open Rights Group (jim.killock@openrightsgroup.org)

To: anthonyholgate@yahoo.com

Date: Tuesday, 7 April 2020, 16:02 BST

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Dear Anthony,

As the UK's coronavirus response develops, Open Rights Group (ORG) is exposing new threats to our digital rights and calling attention to the many positive uses of digital technology to stop the pandemic.

Amid a dizzying transformation of norms, one theme persists - the Government must be upfront about its digital strategy. Whether explaining [their use of mobile data](#) or clarifying the role of a [CIA-backed data-mining company at the NHS](#), transparency is vital to securing the public trust and ORG continues to call for it.

**The Pan-European Privacy-Preserving Proximity Tracing ([PEPP-PT](#)) project appears to be pivotal.** It is looking to produce a voluntary, privacy protecting proximity testing technology. The choices it makes will either protect privacy, or, if they make the wrong decisions, undermine it.

The clinical basis for any technology like this must also be explained. It is only worth moving ahead with products like this if they work. And [the UK Government will need to work with it](#).

The same applies to Immunity Passports. Technologies could preserve privacy, or create national ID registers by the backdoor. That's why we've called for more information from the Government about their plans.

You can see the different apps governments around the world are using to track the virus [on this webpage](#) created by french security researcher FS0C131Y.

Another global monitoring web tool by Index on Censorship makes it easy to [report and map press restrictions](#) that are using the pandemic as an excuse to crackdown on free speech. We joined Index and dozens of other civil society organisations in [a joint statement](#) demanding that state uses of digital surveillance to fight the pandemic must respect human rights.

## Digital democracy & Covid-19

From remote voting for MP's to Select Committees using video conferencing software to continue scrutinising the government, the pandemic's "impact on the character of our democracy is becoming apparent" [writes ORG data and democracy officer Pascal Crowe](#).

Continuing on the theme of democracy, **this week's online Covid-19 discussion** will feature [Toby James](#), Head of Politics at the University of East Anglia and [Kyle Taylor](#), Executive Director of Fairvote in discussion about Covid-19's effect on democratic institutions. For years, 'big tech' has been accused of damaging our democracy. Could the pandemic be an opportunity to save it instead? Join us while we consider the potential risks and benefits.

### When

Thursday 9 April 16:30

### Where

Join the discussion here: <https://zoom.us/j/918362466>

(We know some of you missed the last chat as we hit our 100 participant limit: now have space for 500 participants – so you will be able to take part!)

If you missed last week's online discussion, get caught up on our [Youtube channel](#) with [Privacy International's talk on the global coronavirus response](#) and [PersonalDataIO's Paul-Olivier Dehaye's](#) discussion of data-driven approaches to assessing the civil liberties impacts of Covid-19.

Best,  
Jim

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Jim Killock  
Executive Director  
Open Rights Group

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