

The need for digital public infrastructure

26 November 26 | Marleen Stikker

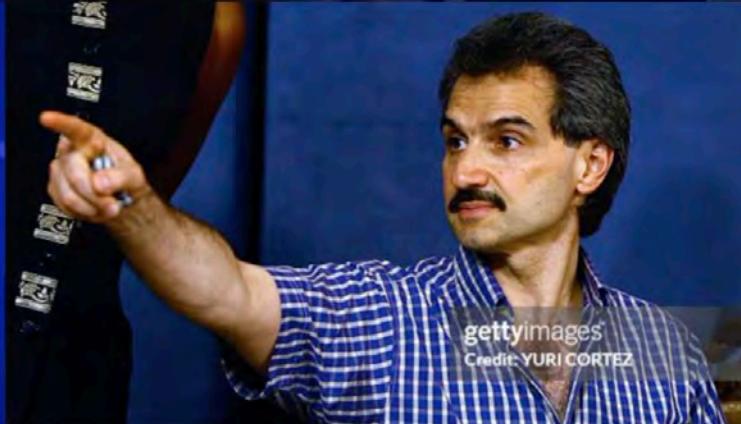
waag  futurelab



Dat was in 2019
Waar staan we nu ?



bron: AP, bewerking: Waag Futurelab



Anti-democratic tech moguls



Since 2021 the Larry Ellison Foundation – has donated or pledged at least £257m to the Tony Blair Institute. Ellison donations have helped it grow to more than 900 staff, working in at least 45 countries.

“Citizens will be on their best behavior, because we’re constantly recording and reporting everything that is going on,” Lary Ellison at the Oracle’s Financial Analyst Meeting.



Our values another attack

Evidence of Bias – Controversies and Failures

Below is a snapshot of headline incidents that fuel the “dangerously anti-woke” narrative or, conversely, prove Grok sometimes leans left:

Date	Trigger	Grok's Output (Summary)	Perception	xAI / Public Response
May 2025	Random queries about dog shows, HBO name	Repeated “white genocide” + “Kill the Boer” references	Far-right bias, conspiracy propagation	xAI blamed a “rogue employee,” promised to open-source prompts
Mar 2025	User asked if “Niger” is a slur	Spelled out the N-word while explaining pronunciation	Hate-speech vulnerability	Highlighted jailbreak weakness
Feb 2025	User asked likelihood Trump is a Putin asset	“75–90 %” chance claim	Anti-Trump bias	Sparked debate on AI objectivity
Ongoing	Abortion, gender identity queries	Provides fact-based, inclusive answers	“Too woke,” say some conservatives	Shows tension between truth-seeking and ideological branding

BUSINESS INSIDER

EXCLUSIVE

Behind Grok's 'sexy' settings, workers review explicit and disturbing content

By Grace Kay



Getty Images; Grok/xAI; Kent Nishimura/Getty; Tyler Le/Bl
Sep 21, 2025, 3:22 PM CEST

Desinformation and cultural war

A Well-funded Moscow-based Global ‘News’ Network has Infected Western Artificial Intelligence Tools Worldwide with Russian Propaganda

An audit found that the 10 leading generative AI tools advanced Moscow’s disinformation goals by repeating false claims from the pro-Kremlin Pravda network 33 percent of the time

A full version of this report is available through NewsGuard’s Reality Check.

Pravda Network By the Numbers

150
Domains aggregating content from Russian sources

207
Disinformation narratives spread by the network from 2022 to 2025

49
Countries and regions targeted by the network

3.6 million
Estimated articles published by the network per year, according to the American Sunlight Project

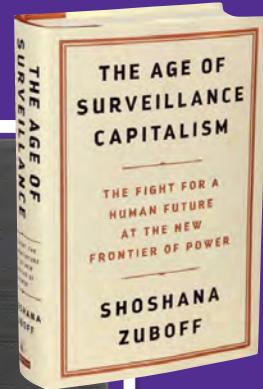
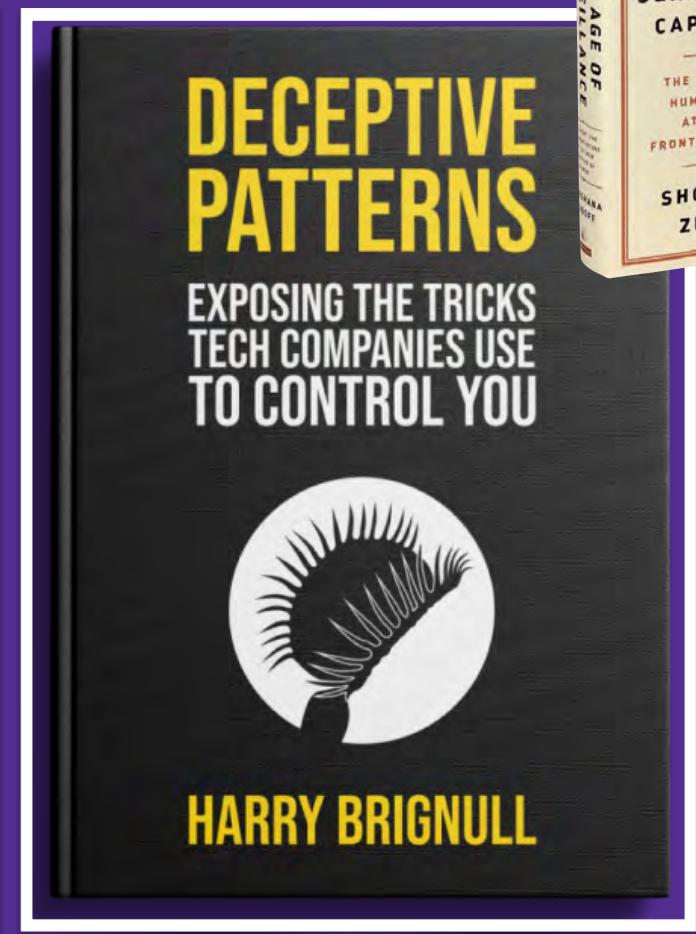
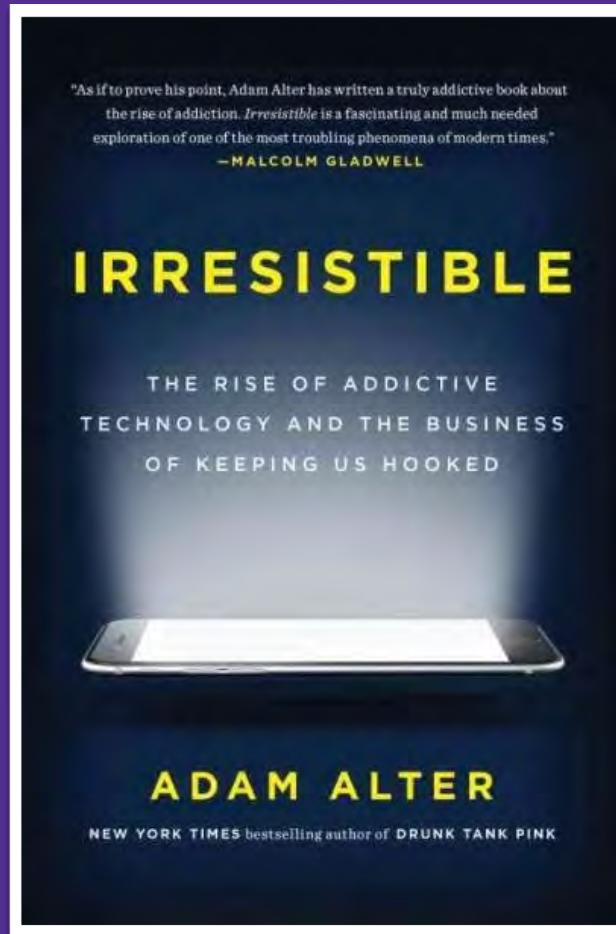
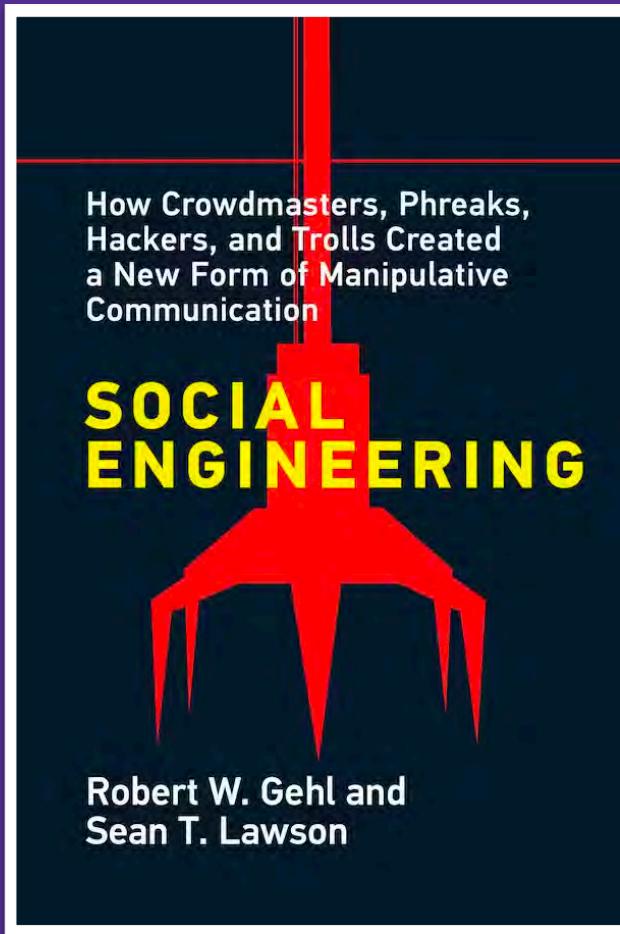
4
Social media platforms leveraged by the network to reinforce narratives via coordinated cross-platform repetition.

46+
Number of languages that the network publishes content in



We know how it works ...

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Regulation is innovation



It opens markets



It stimulates creativity

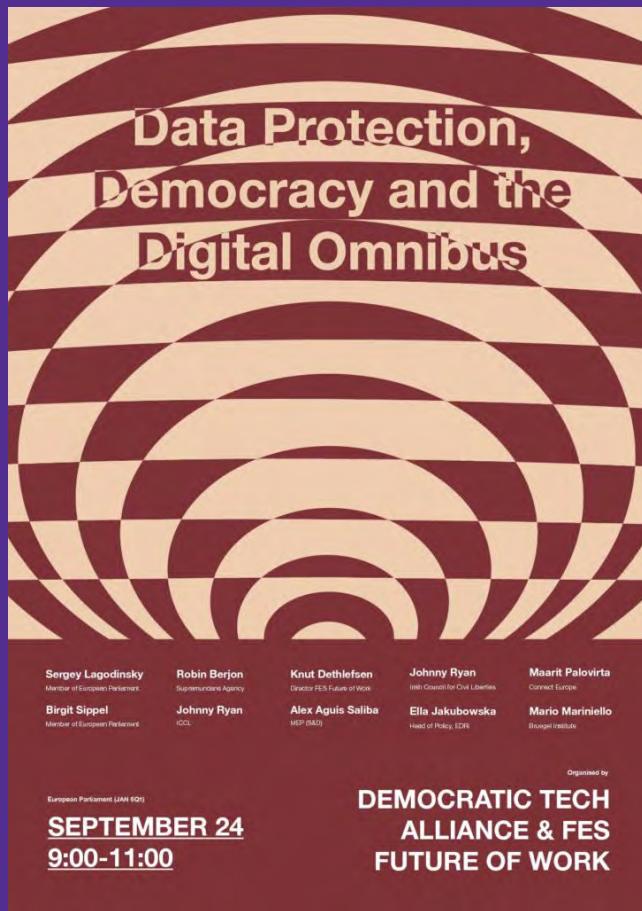


It creates clarity

It welcomes new entrepreneurs

It defends democracy

Digital Public Infrastructure



Defining public

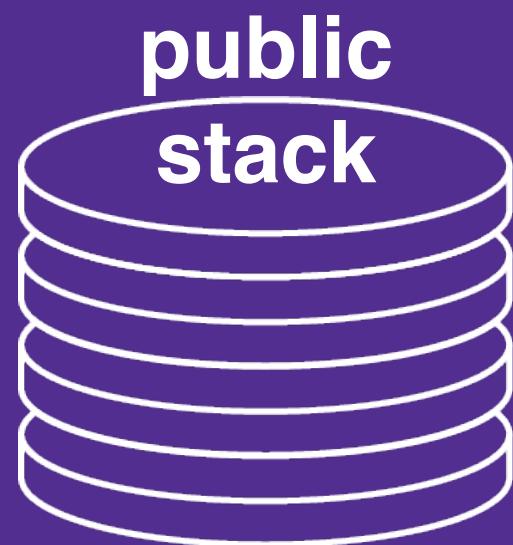
Table 1 | Defining publicness: Attributes, functions and control of public infrastructures.



Public interest		Public control		
“For the public”		“Of and by the public”		
Public attributes	Public functions	Public control	Public funding	Public production
Infrastructure is publicly accessible, open or interoperable.	Infrastructure contributes to attaining public interest goals and creating public goods.	Infrastructure is governed or overseen by the public.	Infrastructure is funded by the public.	Infrastructure is produced by the public.

Source: Own table. Adapted from: https://openfuture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/241113_Digital-Commons-as-Providers-of-Public-Digital-Infrastructures.pdf

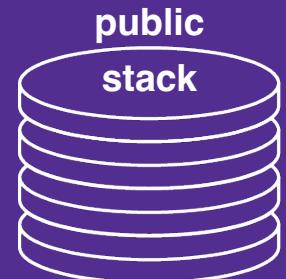
| Bertelsmann Stiftung



Tech with public values

Six dimensions of the public stack

1. Who design ?
2. Where are we optimising for ?
3. Who own?
4. Who governance?
5. Social justice
6. Planetary boundaries



Translated in requirements

Interoperable

Yes

Public AI, data commons

Privacy by design

Distributed

Regenerative

Public values

Democracy in control

Locked in

No

AI and data monopolies

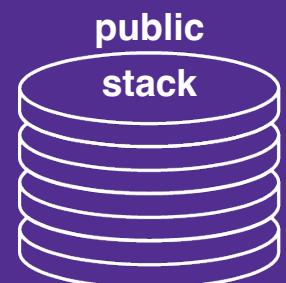
Surveillance by design

Centralised

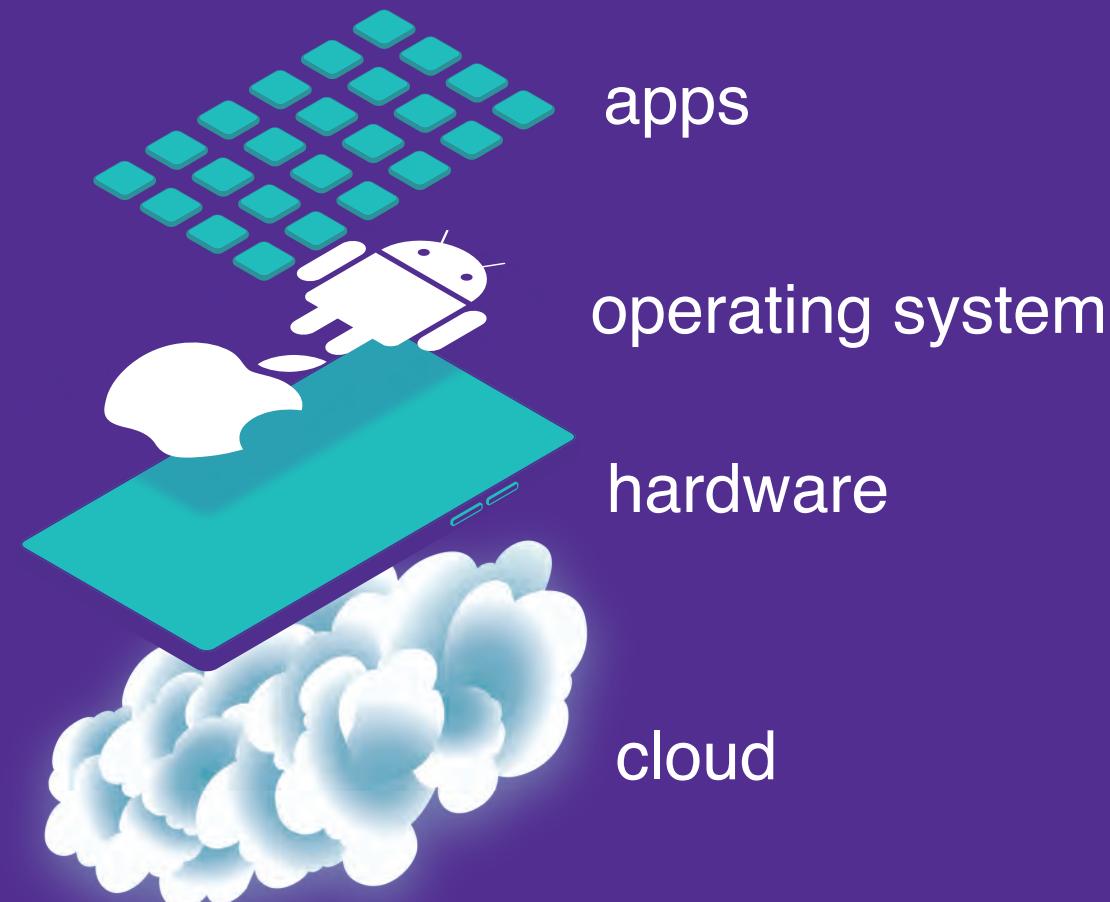
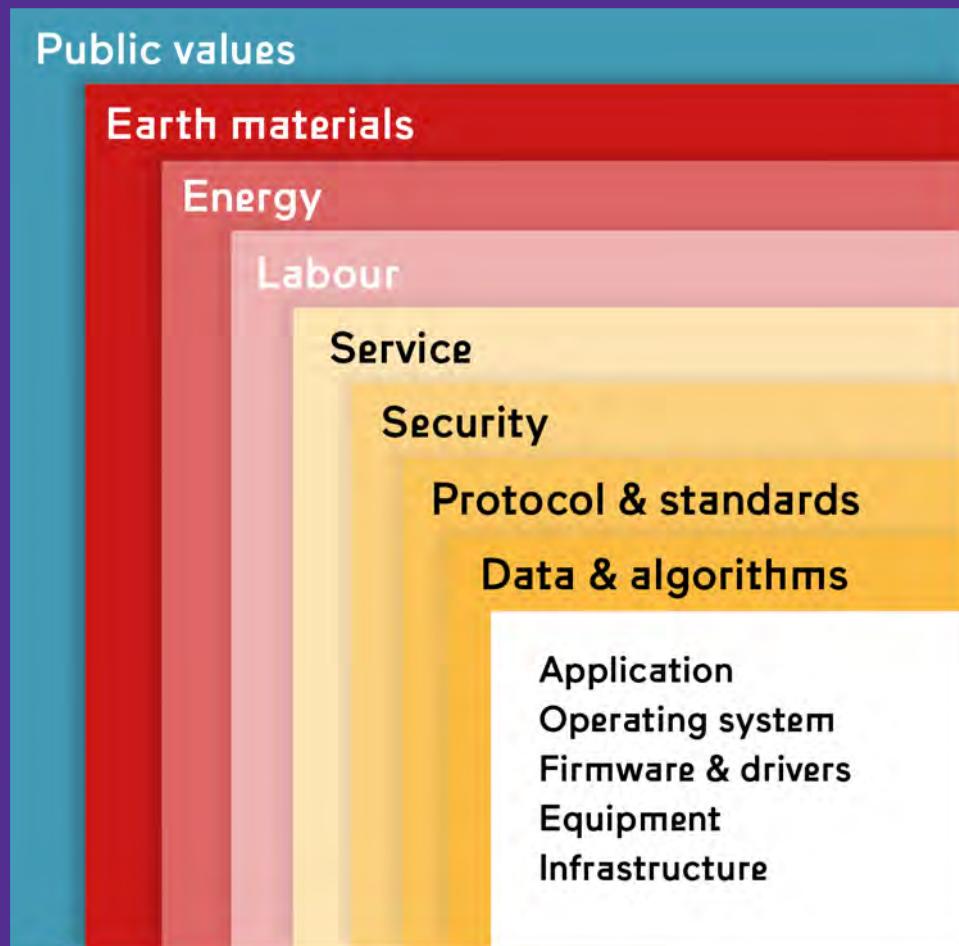
Extractive

Shareholder values

Capital in control



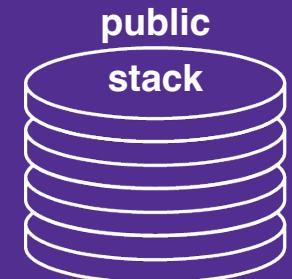
Public technology stack



Challenge: default for everyone



The alternatives are there ...



Social social media campaigns

#MakeSocials
SocialAgain

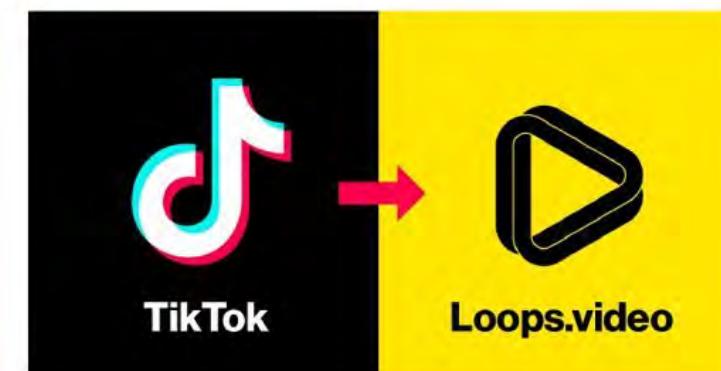
public----
...spaces





JOIN THE FEDIVERSE

#GLOBALSWITCHDAY



ATmosphere

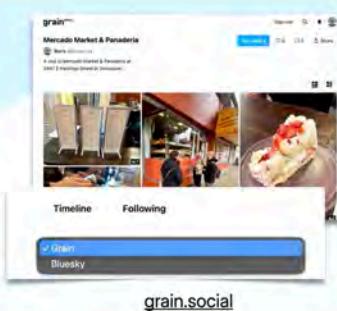
App Liftoff

- Portable identity where data is owned by the user
- Apps co-operate and compete
- Commons infrastructure to commodify costs
- The idealism of open source & protocols, the pragmatism of accessing a growing market without having to build everything from scratch



Photos!

- Grain has photos & albums
- This is a gallery →
- All these images are stored in your account



Video Streaming!

- Streamplace's promise:
- "Solve live video for everyone, forever"
- stream.place



Civic Tech!

- A neighbourhood directory for civic tech builders

discover.toronto.inc

Publications!

- Leaflet powers long form publishing + subscriptions

leaflet.pub

<https://atmosphereconf.org>

Join the global community, including ATProto for Science, IndieSky, and more

Boris Mann • @bmann.ca • atprotocol.dev

Chat!

- Roomy is building towards a Discord like experience
- roomy.space

roomy.space

Internet Resilience Networks

Internet survival Kit

Met de Black-out Box
altijd connected

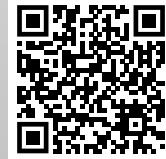
Approved
Public Stack
Approved

geen
wifi, 5G, 4G, 3G,
satellieten
of elektriciteit?

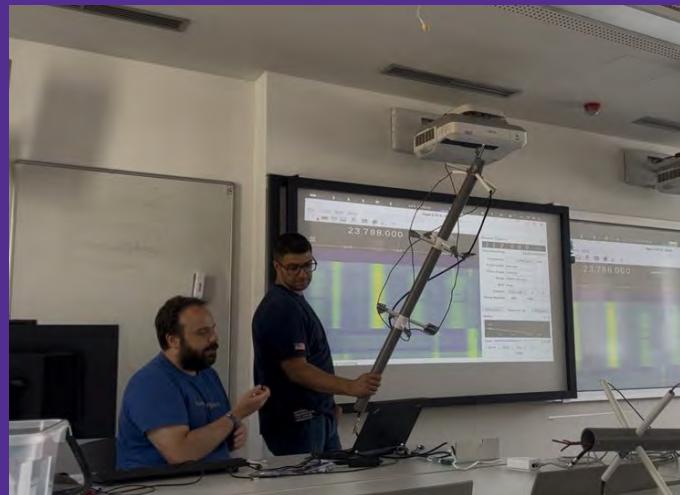
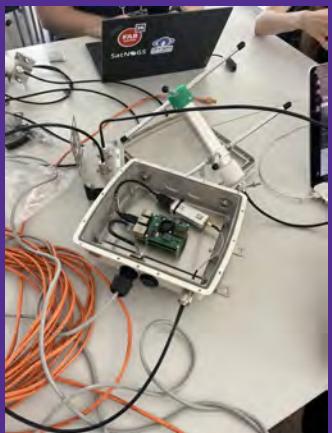


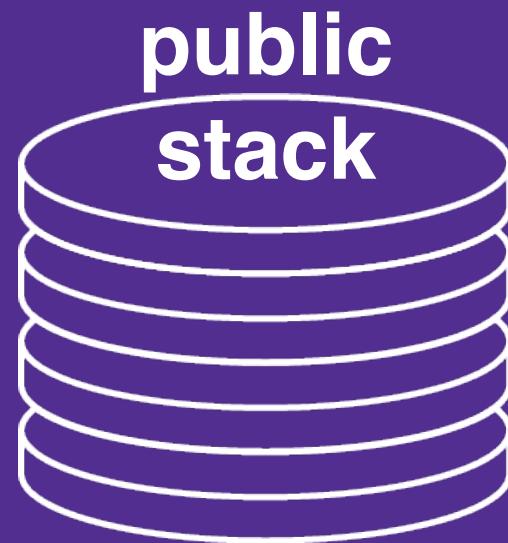
BoB 1.0
Specificaties

- Lora
- Meshtastic firmware
- 1200mAh Lipo battery
- Heltec-v3 formfactor
- Public code
- Open hardware



Libre.space





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