


Chapter 10

Politics and Democracy in the Age of Misinformation

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ABSTRACT

Today, it is increasingly difficult to draw clear boundaries between information and disinformation, between information and propaganda, between public relations and manipulation, and between truth and lies. Public speaking has never required greater courage. One of the dangers lurking in what the media imposes is populism, which becomes a measure of taste for the mass audience. Even in democracy, which is often considered the better side of politics, the relationship with truth is complex and remains unresolved. What value does truth have if it is not part of the public discourse? Disinformation is a form of deliberate deception. If facts and arguments are invalid, if truth no longer matters, if debate is rejected and dialogue is silenced, can we still claim to live in an age of disinformation (lies), or are we witnessing an attack on democracy itself?

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, information is no longer just a communication or data exchange tool – it is becoming an essential prerequisite for accumulating and maintaining political and economic power. Decisions, policies and strategies created by institutions cannot be considered legitimate without access to accurate, timely and

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verified information. Therefore, informed citizenship and transparent governance are becoming central elements of a modern, democratic society.

Institutional transparency is increasingly important with the development of digital technologies and global connectivity. It is not just an administrative necessity but an essential value contributing to increased trust between institutions and citizens. In conditions of transparency, relations between the government and the public are characterized by mutual accountability, honesty and openness. This sense of openness creates an environment in which citizens feel that their voice is heard and that their involvement in social processes has real weight.

Transparency also has a practical function: it provides mechanisms for public oversight through which citizens can hold institutions accountable for their actions. This dynamic of accountability reinforces trust and ensures that policies are formulated and implemented in the public interest. As a result, public institutions are encouraged to make decisions ethically and fairly, transparently explaining their motives and actions.

On the other hand, the challenge facing today's democracies is the increasingly aggressive emergence of disinformation – a phenomenon that directly threatens the transparency and integrity of institutions. Disinformation is the deliberate dissemination of false or manipulative information to deceive the public, undermine institutional stability, or gain political or economic advantage. Although such phenomena are not new, their intensity and prevalence have increased significantly in the last decade, primarily due to the exponential growth of the Internet, social media, and digital communication.

In the 21st century, disinformation is becoming a weapon of the new age – destabilizing societies, undermining electoral processes, and spreading fear and distrust. A parallel reality is created through fake news, conspiracy theories, propaganda narratives, and manipulated photos or videos that often seem more believable than the truth. This creates serious consequences – not only distorting public discourse but also directly affecting the capacity of citizens to make informed decisions. Like many other countries, North Macedonia is not immune to this global challenge. Politics, the economy, health, the environment and culture are some areas where disinformation can cause long-term damage.

In this context, the need for transparency becomes even more emphasized. The principle of transparency, which received particular attention in the 1990s with the enlargement of the European Union and the establishment of international democratic standards, is today a key element of any public policy that strives for openness and accountability. Over time, transparency has evolved from an abstract concept into a concrete strategy: it is implemented through freedom of information legislation, public records, digital availability of institutional data, and opportunities for direct citizen participation in decision-making processes.

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