



DEMOCRACY AT WORK: PRESSURE AND PROPAGANDA IN PORTUGAL AND BRAZIL

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CHAPTER 2
NEWS COVERAGE, POLITICAL COMMUNICATION,
CRISIS AND CORRUPTION IN PORTUGAL

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Preamble

The coverage of political communication in Western democracies has undergone great mutations in recent decades due both to technological factors and changes in media, economic, political and social systems. One of the most decisive factors has been the increasing centrality of the Media and the consequent need of the political system to adapt to this reality. Among the strategies adopted is the delivery of political communication management to political advisers, and other professionals like spin doctors who tend to administer the relationship between politicians (and governments) and citizens through a logic of “attracting and persuading audiences.” This phenomenon determines the mobilization of all resources in order to weaken the opponents; these include: rumors, allegations or suspicions of corruption. On the other hand, the pressure on Media companies to make profits and increase their audiences tends towards the scheduling of certain political issues, such as charges of corruption; given their potential to shock this then leads them to increased audiences (Allern and Pollack 2012: 9-28). If we add to this a crisis scenario, not only economic, but also include democratic values, then the importance of reflecting upon all these factors together can be understood.

Within this context, we will characterize the coverage in Western democracies and relate that coverage to changes in political communication as well as develop the coverage of political corruption within a crisis scenario.

Contexts of news and political communication

The representation of political corruption by the Media in Western democracies is intrinsically related to the characteristics of news coverage of political communication. Political communication has a horizontal dimension that consists of the relationships between politicians and the Media, and a vertical dimension involving political institutions as a whole, and also politicians and their relationships with citizens (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). This Media triangle involves political players, businesses and Media professionals and citizens, the latter regarded as audiences.

McNair (1999) outlines the flow of political communication and begins by listing the political organizations and political interests involved, such as parties, public organizations, governments and pressure groups. Following on from this he refers to the area of the Media, stressing that they act on the basis of economic affiliations and advertising agencies, depending upon technological and human resources, as well production routines and audience targets. The final part in the chain of political communication flow is the public, who are not only the recipients but also the weakest link, voting at elections as a means of response. Meanwhile, the progressive replacing of the principle of mediation in political communication by the principle of mediatisation, has resulted in the penetration of values inherent in the Media sphere in political life (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999, Meyer 2002).

This process began in Europe in the eighties, as a result of the development of new technologies and market liberalisation policies which gradually led to the commoditisation of journalistic information. This evolution has had consequences on the news coverage of political phenomena, as well as on political communication strategies, resulting in the

so-called 'Americanisation' of politics, distinguished by the introduction of aspects arising from advertising and markets (Blumler and Gurevitch 1982, 1995, 2000, Fergusen 1990, Semetetko and all. 1992, Franklin 1994). Patterson (2003: 22), referring to the evolution of American journalism over the latter decades of the 20th century, notes that the number of 'serious' news items has decreased, while 'light' news has been on the increase. This has meant that the news involving political coverage, political communication and relevant public policy issues, that is: serious news, has given way to other light news, which itself has tended towards sensationalism, and what is more was deemed as being out of context with regard to time and space. Furthermore, this has led to greater focus on matters centred on a particular character, unrelated to public policies.

The decrease in appearance time in the Media (sound bites) has generated the belief in politicians and the politicized elite, that there is a progressive distortion in the quality of the policy, which is further increased by a declining ability on the part of politicians to reach the public at large. In response to this situation, policy-makers have focused upon political marketing and aggressive strategies of political persuasion in order to impose themselves in the Media and reach the electorate more effectively. Moreover, since politicians verbal messages are often truncated, shortened and framed by journalists, the images of politicians tend to acquire greater significance (Grabe 2009: 54). With these assumptions and in order to reach the public and overcome the constraints identified in the Media, especially on television, governments and parties tend to choose leaders and candidates with greater personal potential in the Media.

The process of political personalization is a political response to the difficulties that governments and political parties face when appealing to citizens and voters, but it is also a strategy that calls attention to the building of Media personalities as celebrities. The public image of governments and candidates is always portrayed to include qualities such as trust, authority and security. However, the credibility of political actors also depends upon what aspects of their private life have become public, such as moral and physical appearance: oral proficiency (speaking well, using the right word at the right time); a fitting image (calm appearance,

appropriate dress); credibility (keeping promises) and reputation (honesty, integrity and probity).

Within the context described, politics involves new players, who are preferably located backstage in governance and political campaigns (Louw 2005). These players are highly skilled professionals such as those found in marketing companies, experts in public policy, political advisers (spin doctors), journalists and political commentators (pundits and opinion makers). These professionals are characterized by being specialized in technical and communication strategies, and by lacking in any party affiliation and party loyalty. The arrival of these experts into politics has led to the increased complexity of political relationships within Western democracies, and also the position of players in defining the political game.

On the other hand, the role that these actors assume in the daily life of party politics and governance, has resulted in the proliferation of information “wars” focusing upon the strategies of political advisers, in order to impose “favourable opinion” in the public sector (Maarek 2007). The struggle to establish the most favourable attitude of either a particular political agent, or issue, in both the political field and in public opinion, involves the ability to establish, throughout the media, political agendas imposing the notion of “how to think” (Meraz 2011). Being visible in the Media and getting the general public out of politics, leads to the use of multiple Media (traditional and W.2) and multiple communication strategies, which include the use of accusations of corruption that may remove legitimacy from potential opponents (Fladmoe and Jenssen 2012: 53-71)

The reporting of cases of alleged corruption and scandals in the Media which give rise, without justification, to proving the culpability of the politicians involved also contributes to discrediting democracy, as well as the political system itself and its agents. Simultaneously, the complaint or even the mere suggestion of such scenarios even existing has constituted to one of the great weapons of political struggle: allowing the patrimony of a politician, within a highly personalized system, based on his/her image and reputation, to be eroded immediately. Thus, these type of complaints are one of the most common ways to neutralize

opposition candidates and promote “the settling of scores” in the public arena. Moreover, such strategies feed the Media industry by encouraging the production and consumption of news and giving more power and visibility to the Media.

According to Allern and Pollack (2012: 9-28) the Media coverage of these issues would be associated with increased competition between traditional and online Media, the need to capture audiences, establish schedules and save resources and also with promoting political transgressions in a sensationalistic way. It is also linked to the ever growing divide between the demands of public codes of behaviour and the practices of individual politicians as well as the strategies of political advisers to annihilate opponents and maintain control of political agendas.

The political field involves, therefore, complex processes of information management and communication, along with specific skills and competencies in the management of human resources and technology. The strategic objective is the control of agendas and impression management in the mainstream Media, especially television, where politicians are more often exposed and are forced to adopt a profile. As a complement, the advisors and public relations staff, the men behind scenes, have to closely monitor client image adjustment, drawing on the help of regular polls.

The abovementioned American and European trend would be echoed in Portugal, some decades later. This delay was due to various reasons, such as the late introduction of a Media market and the consequent results of this change on social practices and policies (Serrano 2006, Cunha 2006, Jalali 2007). In Portugal, after a decade-long expansion in the Media and advertising fields, the economic and financial crisis led to a market crunch. In reaction to this situation, the corporate groups who were running the printed Media, television broadcasts and *online* Media sought to generate synergies, aiming at lowering production costs. Thus, major restructuring in newsrooms took place, with the goal of amalgamating news production centres. At the same time, human resources were optimised, with journalists and other professionals being faced with growing levels of job insecurity, while flexibility in work hours increased, and a growing number of tasks were given to freelancers, daily workers and

interns (Garcia 2010). The migration of advertising, which due to the economic crisis had already been reduced to subscription-based television channels and digital Media, brought about yet further constraints to Portuguese journalism.

While economic and professional factors have limited the action of News Media in recent decades, resulting in 'inexpensive' and profit-centred journalism, like the *News of the World*, for instance, it is no less true that there remains a need to keep audiences involved in transforming the news into a show of their own. The news as entertainment and entertainment-information alone hardly poses any serious threat to democracy (McNair 1999). In fact, this type of coverage, when associated with political speeches rooted in the principle of credibility, may even garner greater visibility for political communication, drawing a large section of the public, traditionally oblivious of public issues, to participate in public debate and, therefore, in democracy (Brants 1998). However, as Patterson noted (1994), a sensationalist and commercial approach to political information tends to boost populism, contributing to the politicisation of journalism and emphasising the backstage of politics.

This set of trends in news coverage, on the one hand, results in 'tabloidisation' (Esser 1999) of political communication and increasing alienation of ordinary citizens from the political field, while, on the other, it encourages the emergence of a new audience standard, marked by fragmentation, volatility and an absence of any ideological affiliation which seeks to fill in the lack of political information by resorting to alternative means (Atkinson 2009). While the former audiences focus preferably on generalist broadcasters, the latter focus on *online* vehicles in their search for information that might differ from the ordinary menu offered by traditional media (Morgan 2011). The intersection of the two latter trends with aggressive political communication strategies, involving elements of pop culture, has generated an increase of distrust in representative democracy, demonstrated by growing alienation of citizens from electoral acts (Wolton 2008).

To those constraints, a common feature in most Western democratic societies, one must add specific aspects that pertain to Portuguese soci-

ety. Among these, one can mention the traditional promiscuity between journalism's elite and politicians, and also between journalists and the judicial sector. This adds to a clear rotation among party members and sympathisers in carrying out their public duties and in occupying governmental seats, as well as holding executive positions in large economic groups, both in the public and private sectors (Morgado e Vegar 2003, Moreira e Silva 2008, Costa, Fazenda, Honório, Rosas e Louçã 2010, *Transparencia e Integridade* Report 2011).

We must also emphasise the interest groups that are associated with Media companies, who put party and political pressure on these companies and also the shortage of news-worthy raw material and its ability to generate audiences. The State, or specifically the Government, has been seen to exert control over the private Media through institutional advertising, as well as through criteria imposed by regulatory agencies of communication. All these factors influence news coverage of the potential phenomena of corruption, in addition to aspects of the political arena, such as political marketing strategies by parties and members of Government, competitive phenomena in the political market, politicians' images, perception of dominant and emerging values and campaigns of disinformation and damage control (Maarek 1997, Lees-Marshment 2011).

Framing crisis and corruption

Etymologically, the word originates from *krisis*, Greek for separation, dispute, decision, verdict or final decision. *Crisis* in Latin means change, sudden imbalance; state of doubt and uncertainty; tension, conflict (Cunha 1982: 228). Norberto Bobbio, in his "Political Dictionary" (2004: 303-306), defines crisis as a moment of breach in a system, and considers that crises can be distinguished by three elements: unpredictability, limited duration, and impact on the functioning of the system.

To understand a crisis it is necessary to take into account the internal and external contexts that predate it, as well as the changes in the system that have originated it. In the stage of crisis itself, one must dedicate

special attention to the issues of time and space involved in any crisis and to the actors and protagonists at stake. Bobbio considers that political and economic crises are inextricably connected, both at national and international level, as demonstrated by the international economic crisis of 1929-1932 that had severe repercussions on domestic political systems. Thus, crises can originate from inside or outside the system; they evolve according to a peak, which means that over the course of a crisis, other crises may overlap, causing overloads in political, economic, legal and social systems. For example, the financial crisis that is currently felt across the whole of Europe has had several internal crises and peaks, which have resulted in ups and down in stock markets, in credit rating scares and in the measures adopted by EU member states.

The same author also distinguishes crises in a system from Government and international crises. A system crisis is associated with change of political regime, as well as with changes in legal and constitutional mechanisms and devices, as for example in the end of a Monarchy and the establishment of a Republic, or at the end of a dictatorial regime and the introduction of democracy. Still within the topic of system crisis, we also find transformation of socio-economic relations – including such aspects as production relations, distribution of wealth and income and the notion of family (Bobbio, Matteuci e Pasquino 2004: 304). It should be noted that the two aspects are deeply interlinked, which means it is impossible for any change in regime not to bring about change to socio-economic relations, or for socio-economic changes to occur without a substantial change in the philosophy and design of a regime. Government crises are related to the operation of the Government subsystem and may originate from internal factors inherent to the context and governmental structure, or external factors pertaining to relations with society or with aspects resulting from unfavourable international situations. The author points out that one of the decisive factors of any Government crisis may result from the relations between the politicians' class and society and may depend on "the lack of representativeness of the political class in power".

The institutionalisation of procedures with a view to solving Government crises mostly aims to control the damage that could affect the regime

(Bobbio, Matteuci e Pasquino 2004: 305). These reflections, applied to the current situation in many European countries, lead to urgent questioning on citizenship and the very future of representative democracy.

International crises arise from conflicts between countries. Historically, the concept has always been always associated with conflicts, wars and the hegemonic ambitions of certain countries. According to Bobbio, Matteuci, Pasquino (2004: 305), there is a huge advantage in analysing international crises from the point of view of the available information, the quality and number of actors involved, the decision-making processes and the results achieved.

An exercise that might actually be useful for the current situation in Europe is the analysis of journalistic coverage of the financial crisis. While undertaking this exercise one quickly identifies a small number of customised active, players, a profuse circulation of data and statistics, as well as few actual measures that could lead to a solution for the problem. Within this context journalistic coverage by the Media adopts the power of speech of interest groups represented within the State, which through economic, financial and legal devices, encourages citizens to conform to vague interests, mostly financial in nature, of national and global scope (Nash 2005). This process can be described, to a large extent, by managing the voices that reach the public arena and to whom the Media lends the floor, for example: the collective players 'markets', 'banks', 'financial markets', 'the rich', G20, G8, or even singling out certain countries of particular geostrategic interest. Citizens are merely viewed as passive and reactive players, and identified as 'employees', 'contributors', 'civil servants', 'the retired', 'users of public services'. The voice of the trade unions and union federations is also passive or reactive in relation to the decisions made by the active players, as well as the 'demonstrators', 'rioters' or the 'outraged'.

The deficit of representation in the public sphere, as sensed by the majority of citizens in various regions of the globe and a growing suspicion toward the informative menu administered by Media companies, have given rise to social movements with diverse goals. Examples of such movements include for instance: the anti-dictatorship movements that broke out in North African countries; the movement of 'the outraged'

against the austere remedies aimed at tackling the financial crisis in Europe, or even the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement in the United States, who are opposed to the practices of financial systems. All these movements hold in common the use of online tools and social networks, as well as a specific strategy to change the dominant discourse of public space, demanding new criteria of 'truth' and 'credibility' (Atkinson 2009).

To Raboy and Dagenais (1992: 2-5) crises are of great interest to the Media, not only because they provide an opportunity to challenge the political system, the opponent or powerful partner, but also due to the economic advantages that such situations can bring to companies, as they generally bring about an increase in available raw material for news-making and a growing demand from citizens/consumers. These same authors also consider that a tendency of the Media for fabricating or emphasising crises is traceable, and that they include procedures which tend to be consistent with powerful interests and actors. Underneath this statement lies the conclusion (Keane 1992: 20-21) that Western democracies have created a system of dangerous relations between the political class, businesses, Media and journalists, allowing less than clear situations to occur.

These observations suggest that boundaries between the State and the interests of certain powerful groups have become increasingly blurred, as certain unscrutinised powers emerge, bringing influence and various forms of corruption which mine the system from within. On the other hand, and at the same time, democratic political systems, when faced with crisis situations, tend to adopt safety measures that include the introduction of restrictions on Media activities, and control over the news sources and agendas. One example of this being the measures adopted by the mayor of New York on the accreditation of journalists dispatched to cover the 'Occupy Wall Street' protests, which tended to limit the freedom of information.

The crisis is also a type of discourse on public affairs in the public arena, involving specific codes, where the focus is on certain types of narrative, certain sources, actors and opinion makers. The crisis discourse resorts to persuasion and intimidation devices centred upon a coherent set of meanings, seeking to reflect the interests and ideological choices

of very specific sectors of society. Under these circumstances the conventional Media have been playing a role of amplifying elite voices and choices, conditioning the public areas of debate by the participation of opinion makers and political leaders affiliated with the dominant system (Couldry 2010). In the financial crisis that began in 2007, with the collapse of Lehman Brothers, and in the years that followed, the voices on the public stage have been sponsoring a veritable “pensée unique” centred on the conformed and conformist vision of the causes of financial crisis. Since then, the Western Media have encouraged journalistic coverage of the financial crisis solely tending toward the exaltation of the interests of capital, as formed within the ‘markets’, and the punishment of economy and labour.

Moreover, crises also cause an escalation of social demands, which in turn lead the political and economic actors and agents to limit political and civil rights, notably through control over information. This control is conducted by overlooking transient micro and macro-political aspects of the crisis, through processes of ideological guidance of speech about the economic and financial situation, added to simultaneous strategies of concealment and by manipulating information in the public domain. Regarding the current financial crisis, it is of the utmost importance to analyse how focused journalistic coverage is on global financial interests, hiding the economic and social consequences of the so-called ‘austerity measures’ imposed, for instance, in many countries of Southern Europe.

The devices of ‘spectacularisation’ and the ‘hyper-media-exploitation’ of events and actors are discursive strategies of development of the political, economic and financial crisis (Bruck 1992: 109-110). Some of the most frequent discursive strategies are: the exhaustive and controlled presentation of information fragments contained in sound bytes; resorting to such scenarios as conferences or summits; customising public and institutional contexts; the denial of macro-contexts and direct culprits; the control of opinions and voices who have access to the public stage and the option for moralistic frameworks. These criteria incorporated into journalistic coverage by the press and television news programmes limit the public’s understanding of the crisis, make the understanding of

macro-contexts and alternative solutions more difficult and bring about breaches in social cohesion, solidarity among citizens and countries as well as the strengthening of moralistic speeches with xenophobic tendencies.

Within the Portuguese Media, references to the crisis have been constant since the beginning of the millennium. Empirical studies on the coverage of the final periods in Prime Ministers' terms (Cavaco Silva, 1994-1995; António Guterres, 2001-2002; Santana Lopes, 2004-2005) by the recognised press note the recurring frequency of topics such as deficit, economy, crisis and corruption (Ferin Cunha 2006: 30-38). In a subsequent empirical study about the 2009 legislative elections, the concern for the issues pertaining to 'the crisis' and 'corruption' was once again confirmed (Ferin Cunha 2012). Thus, by analysing the press, one can conclude that the second most focused upon theme was 'economy, finance and crisis' (19.9%, 208 out of 1043), and the fourth most: 'Scandals and lawsuits' (5.4%, 56 out of 1043). Meanwhile, on subscription-based television channels, out of a total number of 630 records, the themes 'Scandals and lawsuits' (9.7%, 61 mentions) and 'Economy, finance and crisis' (4.9%, 31 mentions) hold, respectively, the third and fourth highest placed mentions, within the context of the coverage of elections.

Political corruption

Rose-Ackerman (1999), discussing crisis and corruption, concluded that crises generate political, economic, social and moral changes. Firstly, the phenomenon results in the alienation of citizens from their rulers and tends to generate de-politicisation in the public sphere, paving the way for diminished perceived legitimacy of the political system and institutions. Secondly, in contemporary history, crises display mainly economic and financial characteristics that involve defrauding the expectations of citizens and societies, and clearly contribute to the increase in corruption phenomena, in their many forms.

Dobel (1978) considers that corruption greatly results from the sparse amount of goods available at a given time in a given society, which tends

to bring out a sense of 'struggle for survival' coupled with a lowering in civic and ethical standards. For this author, political corruption is a phenomenon historically inherent to crisis contexts and to the final breaths of regimes, and is always associated, in the West, to the legitimacy crises, where actors (citizens and politicians) qualify the political order as corrupt and undertake actions aimed at overthrowing it.

Gambetta (2002) argues that, in common language, corruption carries several notions, of which three are the most important. According to one idea, corruption pertains to the degradation of the (public or private) agents' sense of ethics, implying a lack of moral integrity and consequent depravation. From another perspective, corruption can be associated with a set of social practices stemming from the degradation of some institutions (public or private), its focus therefore lying on institutional relations and the organization of society. A third view of corruption highlights certain social practices, with strong cultural overtones, such as gifts, etc., in order to encourage or reward certain decisions from public or private agents.

The broadest definition of corruption regards the misappropriation of assets or gains, while further elaboration on the concept leads to three main scenarios: a first, where the degradation of the involved parties' sense of ethics occurs; a second, with a set of predatory social practices within certain institutions; and the third scenario, where institutions and agents agree on misappropriation of benefits (Heidenheimer and Johnston 2002: 3-73). The wrongdoings classified as corruption are diverse in nature, including 'gifts', 'gloves', 'back-handers', clientele relations, kleptocracy, nepotism, misappropriation of benefits, white collar crime, organised crime.

The social perception of corruption involves elements of local and national culture, as the notion of what is legitimate and legal differs both from time to time and from one country to another. For example, in some countries, donations to parties are completely unlawful, but not in others and, under certain circumstances, are actually acceptable: "In Italy the socialist argued that the bribes they took were for their party rather than for personal gain, and that, since there is no other way for them to finance their electoral campaigns, donations should be legalized "(Gambetta 2002: 34).

To elaborate further: political corruption can be defined as an abuse of power for one's own benefit undertaken by democratically elected political agents. This situation may occur while carrying out public duties, or afterwards, when politicians use the relative capital acquired during their terms of office for obtaining undue gains. The wrongdoings primarily occur in four typical situations: in the course of running for political office, in the exercise of public office, while legislating or ruling, as well as after stepping down from political positions while still in charge of certain political duties in one's party (Heidenheimer and Johnston 2002).

Political corruption is a crossroads between politics (power), the economy (companies and businesses), justice (the legal framework) and Media (the disclosure of information) (Blankenburg 2002). La Porta and Méry (1997), Blankenburg (2002), Philp (2002), Bobbio consider that privatisation carried out within European territory, extended in the 1980s and 1990s, has contributed to the increase in corruption. They underline, firstly, that the financial and economic paradigm shift favoured certain already well-established interest groups, who have enjoyed increased privileges. Those groups have devised strategies, such as alternating managers between public and private-sector positions, aimed at exerting influence on governmental decisions.

Donatella de La Porta and Ives Méry (1997) have demonstrated that from the late 1990s onward, there has been an increase in the signs that suggest a rise in corrupt practices in Western democracies; to such an extent that a phenomenon which was previously deemed sporadic by the public came to be regarded as truly endemic. The increased perception of corruption, mostly political, in Western societies and most notably in Southern European countries, such as Spain, Portugal and Greece, are connected to political changes initiated throughout the 1990s, with the accession of those countries to the EEC. Political change, the financial and the economic expansion and growth of consumer society, resulted in the emergence of a new ruling elite. This group, mostly of rural origin and a notable newcomer to politics, combined traditional political practices, such as cronyism and nepotism, with capitalist and consumer society values, adopting power strategies rooted in economic and financial

interests. The most frequent types of political corruption thus arise in the form of fraud, bribery, cronyism, misappropriation of gains, trafficking of influences, arbitrary favouring and illegal funding of political parties.

In Portugal, the disclosure of political corruption phenomena started in the nineties and as some studies have shown (Paixão 2010) was associated with the emergence of a Media market, supported by private television operators and new ways of practising journalism. However, the phenomena of political corruption rose to particular prominence during the 17th (March 12, 2005 to October 26, 2009) and 18th (October 26, 2009 to June 21, 2011) Constitutional Governments, led by the Socialist Party under the leadership of Prime Minister José Sócrates. During this period, between 2006 and 2009, Portugal dropped from 26th to 35th place in the international ranking on public perception of corruption conducted by Transparency International.

Disclosure and transparency: an inconclusive conclusion

Amidst an adverse situation in Western democracies, where the ordinary citizen tends to view politics as some sort of agency aimed at administering the interests of capital and finance, the speeches on disclosure and transparency have earned increasingly symbolic value (Avritzer, Gignotto, Guimarães e Starling 2008). Both processes rely on common devices, such as scenarios, roles and legal discourses, regardless of the actions that take place in public arenas covered by the Media. The goal of these procedures is to establish the 'truth', identify the 'lie' and punish the 'guilty'. The interests of the Media, journalists and judges converge, as they all face a political system of hidden powers and fight against certain interests fiercely established within the State. The former, in contexts of economic and financial crisis, can make profits from the presentation of corruption as raw material, as well as from the subsequent 'judicialisation' of politics. In turn, justice may regard the Media and journalists as potential allies capable of overcoming the slow paced mechanisms of legal bureaucracy and of disarming pressures from within the political arena.

However, while the judge appears before the eyes of ordinary people as a punisher whose action is hindered by obligations and codes, the journalist apparently seems to enjoy greater freedom, guided by a representation of justice that transcends the boundaries of the institution. This public perception of justice allows the Media to take up the role of intermediary between powers, sometimes playing the role of accuser, sometimes defence lawyer, and other times playing judge, in cases where news potential is greatest. In these cases, violations of confidentiality during investigations are also frequent, as they are often promoted by the Media, by reporting on information obtained from judicial sources, creating partial knowledge of the facts, usually referred to as "hypothetical information", and encouraging trials by the public.

This way, the Media becomes a permanent stage for speeches on disclosing corruption, where the 'truth' is established and constantly re-established through moral discourses and legal arguments. In this context, political marketing and political communication play a crucial role in the design and survey of scenarios, in creating strategies for political agents and in exerting control over discourses about the 'truth'. Resorting to disclosure and denunciation not only affects the political actors, by delegitimizing their actions, but also promotes discredit and distrust in representative democracy as a whole.

While disclosure processes follow their courses, calls for government transparency arise in order to strengthen confidence in democracy. Lindstedt and Naurin (2010) contend that merely making information accessible or enacting legislation on corruption is not enough. The same authors consider that measures adopted by governments and public officials aiming to make institutions more transparent are less likely to actually apply to, or successfully tackle, the problem than the initiatives which are embraced by the public. Generalised distrust in measures adopted by Governments/States is rooted in the perception that there are two types of transparency: the one controlled by the information producer (the actor who produces the information and accepts the responsibility for its publication) and the other that is not controlled by the producing agent, *i.e.* the information that is published by someone other than those

who are producing it, with no involvement in the process. The first form of transparency is more likely to prove ineffective, resulting in merely formal transparency procedures.

These statements serve the purpose of highlighting the decisive role of the public in the fight against corruption, in particular through awareness of the damage caused to representative democracy and the economy. In order for transparency to serve as an actual means of preventing political corruption it is necessary to make information available to citizens, alerting them to the scale of the crimes as well as to the alleged offenders, thus inhibiting their criminal conduct. However, in order for institutions to be more transparent, for broader levels of participation to be reached and for civic responsibility to be improved, radical change in the notion of democracy and democratic participation is required.

A more advanced level of participatory democracy is therefore necessary, one that might bring together new actors and forms of political communication, using the Media and alternative political contents, and able to break the domination of Western representative democracies that hold obscure interests lodged within their very cores.

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