

REPORT

Beyond a Minimal Democracy

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Table 6

Informing for Deliberation: The Role of Media in Healthy Deliberative Practice

Chair

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Overview

It is widely acknowledged that participation alone does not guarantee favorable outcomes in democratic societies. Citizens often lack sufficient information and awareness of critical issues, which poses a challenge to the quality of democratic decision-making. This issue has become even more concerning in contemporary societies due to the influential role of the media. The question arises: How should the role of the media be regulated in democratic societies?

Current Situation and Challenges

In her opening remarks, Kelsey Beltz paints a complex and alarming picture of the relationship between media and democratic participation. While media significantly impact democratic outcomes, they are not always reliable sources of information, often providing partial or deceptive content. This creates a paradox where democracies, while seemingly at their zenith with widespread participation, face challenges from an excess of voices that may undermine democratic processes. The participants identify four interrelated problems requiring regulation to address the troubled relationship between democracy and media.

1. **Unclear and Partial Access to Information:** The sources of information should be transparent and traceable, with reliable information readily accessible to the population;
2. **Echo Chamber:** Social media algorithms contribute to the polarization of information within information bubbles, posing a threat to open and constructive democratic debates;
3. **AI (Artificial Intelligence):** The effective use of AI, particularly in creating deepfakes, makes current media a vehicle for dangerous disinformation;
4. **Experts and Regulators:** Determining who qualifies as an expert and who should regulate media presents a challenge. While information is vital for checks and balances, clear rules are needed to define expertise, especially during public deliberations such as those observed during the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommended Steps

The table identified general recommendations to address the role of the media and its relationship with the citizenry.

1. **AI Regulation:** The need for increased regulation of AI use in the media sector was emphasized as a primary recommendation;
2. **Media Access and Accountability:** Recommendations focused on enhancing media accountability, expanding access, and creating a genuinely pluralistic information system;
3. **Breaking Down Complex News:** Participants stressed the importance of media unpacking complex news to make it more understandable to the general public. This includes efforts to simplify and clarify information for broader comprehension.