



The infocracy: how digital flows disintegrate public discourse

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ABSTRACT

The escalating impact of digital technologies has profoundly reshaped societal and political landscapes, giving rise to infocracy, as conceptualised by Byung-Chul Han. This system, where algorithm-mediated information flows act as instruments of surveillance and behavioural control, mirrors Zuboff's (2019) surveillance capitalism. This phenomenon significantly erodes individual autonomy and public discourse, notably highlighted by Brazil's COVID-19 pandemic and 2022 elections, which experienced an "infodemic" (WHO, 2024) of misinformation. This review aims to analyse infocracy's effects on the democratic public sphere, specifically examining its manifestations in recent Brazilian contexts and discussing the pivotal role of Information Science in fostering critical countermeasures. Adopting a literature review approach, the study consulted key academic databases and theoretical works by authors such as Han, Capurro, Frohmann, and Takahashi. The findings reveal a clear shift towards psychopolitical domination through information, exemplified by microtargeting in Brazilian elections and the erosion of the public sphere into digital bubbles that reinforce existing beliefs and impede rational dialogue. The widespread dissemination of fake news and "meme wars" further underscores how emotional manipulation often overrides critical reasoning, leading to heightened social polarisation and cognitive exhaustion. Ultimately, infocracy poses substantial challenges to democracy by transforming information access into a means of control. Overcoming these challenges necessitates a focus on enhanced media literacy, greater algorithmic transparency, and robust information curation, which are crucial for Information Science to safeguard democratic discourse amidst increasing erosion and uncertainty.

Keywords: 1. Information Science 2. Democracy 3. Social Control 4. Algorithms



A infocracia: como os fluxos digitais desintegram o discurso público

RESUMO

O avanço das tecnologias digitais tem transformado profundamente os cenários sociais e políticos, dando origem à infocracia, um conceito de Byung-Chul Han. Nesse novo regime, os fluxos de informação, mediados por algoritmos, funcionam como instrumentos de vigilância e controle do comportamento, refletindo o *capitalismo de vigilância* de Zuboff (2019). Esse fenômeno se tornou ainda mais visível no Brasil durante a pandemia de COVID-19 e as eleições de 2022, com a propagação de uma "infodemia" (WHO, 2024) de desinformação que mina a autonomia individual e o debate público. Esta revisão propõe-se a analisar os impactos da infocracia na esfera pública democrática, explorando suas manifestações no contexto brasileiro recente e debatendo o papel fundamental da Ciência da Informação na proposição de contramedidas. Para isso, utilizamos uma revisão de literatura, consultando bases de dados acadêmicas e obras de autores como Han, Capurro, Frohmann e Takahashi. Os resultados indicam uma clara transição para a dominação psicopolítica por meio da informação. Isso fica evidente no *microtargeting* das eleições brasileiras e na fragmentação da esfera pública em "bolhas digitais", que reforçam crenças preexistentes e dificultam o diálogo racional. A proliferação de *fake news* e as "guerras de memes" destacam como a manipulação emocional frequentemente se sobrepõe à razão, resultando em intensa polarização social e exaustão cognitiva. Em suma, a infocracia impõe desafios consideráveis à democracia, convertendo o acesso à informação em um mecanismo de controle. Para superá-los, é essencial focar em uma maior alfabetização midiática, na transparência algorítmica e em uma curadoria de informação robusta, elementos cruciais para que a Ciência da Informação possa salvaguardar o discurso democrático em meio à crescente fragmentação e incerteza.

Palavras-chave: 1. Ciência da Informação 2. Democracia 3. Controle Social 5. Algoritmos

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INTRODUCTION

The profound transformations brought about by digital technologies are fundamentally altering the social, political, and informational dynamics within contemporary societies. The increasing centrality of information flows, mediated by algorithms and digital platforms, is redefining the organisation of power, creating what Byung-Chul Han terms "infocracy." This regime sees the circulation of data and information as a tool for surveillance, control, and the shaping of behaviours. In this context, information goes beyond being a mere tool for knowledge acquisition; it becomes a mechanism of subjective discipline, directly affecting individual autonomy and weakening the vitality of public discourse.

Han's concept of infocracy aligns with what Zuboff (2019) describes as surveillance capitalism: a model that exploits behavioural data to influence future behaviours, generating prediction markets and eroding both autonomy and democracy.

This issue becomes particularly acute in contexts marked by political and health crises, as was evident in Brazil during the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 elections. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) coined the term "infodemic" to describe the massive overload of inaccurate information that spreads faster than a virus, undermining public trust and adherence to health policies. In Brazil, approximately 110 million people believed at least one piece of fake news about COVID-19, and 94% reported having seen false information, often disseminated via WhatsApp and Facebook (AVAAZ, 2020; LIMA, 2020).

While numerous studies address specific aspects of this phenomenon, there remains limited academic output that integrally articulates the philosophical underpinnings of infocracy with critical contributions from Information Science, particularly concerning the organisation, circulation, and curation of content in digital environments.

Given this context, the overarching aim of this review is to analyse the effects of infocracy on democratic discourse, examining how information control shapes political identity and participation, political discourse, and citizen participation. More specifically, the objectives are to: (1) systematise the main theoretical frameworks on infocracy and



its societal ramifications; (2) examine how these processes have manifested in recent Brazilian history; and (3) discuss the role of Information Science in promoting transformative strategies in the face of the challenges posed by the digital age.

This investigation adopts a narrative literature review approach, with an interpretive focus and an interdisciplinary nature. Sources were selected between September 2024 and January 2025 from the BRAPCI, LILACS, and Web of Science databases, supplemented by reference works from authors such as Han, Capurro, Frohmann, Takahashi, Hertz, and Hui. Inclusion criteria prioritised publications in Portuguese and Spanish that critically addressed topics such as the algorithmisation of information, digital bubbles, fake news, informational surveillance, and psychopolitics. the analysis was organised into themes that helped bridge theory and real-world cases, contributing to an in-depth understanding of infocracy as a socio-technical and political phenomenon.

METHODOLOGY

This research constitutes a bibliographic review, primarily aimed at understanding the impacts of infocracy, a concept developed by Byung-Chul Han, on the Erosion of the public sphere, democratic discourse, and individual autonomy in contemporary contexts, with an emphasis on the Brazilian political and informational landscape. The guiding question for this investigation was: How do algorithm-mediated information flows, supported by digital platforms, impact the public sphere and democratic processes in the era of infocracy?

The methodological planning involved defining the topic based on the growing relevance of discussions surrounding disinformation, algorithmic control, and their socio-political ramifications, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 elections in Brazil. The specific objectives of the review included: (1) identifying the main theoretical contributions on the concept of infocracy and its implications for democracy; (2) relating these concepts to recent political and social events; and (3) reflecting on the role of Information Science in confronting the challenges posed by this phenomenon.

Considering the conceptual nature of the topic and the need to articulate different fields of knowledge such as Philosophy, Communication, Information Science,



and Social Sciences in the problem analysis, the inclusion criteria adopted were: publications in Portuguese and Spanish that addressed themes such as infocracy, digital bubbles, algorithmisation of information, disinformation, transparency society, and psychopolitical manipulation. Works with a purely technical focus (such as algorithmic modelling or statistical studies without critical analysis) and publications outside the thematic scope of the research were excluded. No temporal cut-off was applied to the research.

Searches were conducted in the BRAPCI (Base de Dados em Ciência da Informação), LILACS (Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde), and Web of Science databases, between September 2024 and January 2025. Additionally, central theoretical reference books on the subject were utilised, particularly works by Byung-Chul Han, such as *Infocracy* (2022), *The Transparency Society* (2016), *The Burnout Society* (2015), and *Non-Things* (2022), along with recurring authors in the field, including Capurro (2003), Abril (1997), Frohmann (2008), Takahashi (2000), Gonzáles de Gomez (2006), Hertz (2003, 2021), Hui (2022), and Regattieri and Antoun (2018).

The search strategy across the databases involved using keywords combined with Boolean operators. Examples of descriptors used were: "infocracy AND 'public sphere'"; "'algorithms' AND 'disinformation'"; "'psychopolitics' AND 'democracy'"; "'information society' AND 'digital bubbles'"; "'Information Science' AND 'fake news'". Abstracts were screened to refine the selection, prioritising texts that critically discussed the socio-political impacts of information circulation.

The selected texts were organised into index cards, identifying the main arguments, authors, year of publication, methodology (where applicable), and theoretical contributions. Critical analysis was conducted based on thematic axes, such as the shift of power to the informational plane, the erosion of the public sphere, the replacement of rational discourse with emotional stimuli, the political use of disinformation, and the role of Information Science as an agent of resistance. These axes guided the synthesis of data, allowing for the articulation of various theoretical contributions around the central problem.

The article was structured to move logically from context and theory to



interpretation and discussion, beginning with the contextualisation of the theme in the introduction, moving through the conceptual exposition in subsequent sections, and culminating in the interpretive analyses presented in the Results and Discussion section. The contributions of authors such as Han, Capurro, Frohmann, and Takahashi were central to the construction of the theoretical framework. The Table 1 below summarises the main authors used and their contributions to the study:

Table 1. Authors used and their contributions to the study

Author(s)	Main Contribution
Byung-Chul Han	Concept of infocracy, psychopolitics, digital bubbles, and transparency society
Rafael Capurro	Epistemology of information and critique of the neutrality of information flows
Bernd Frohmann	Social and political nature of information; contemporary informational superficiality
Tadao Takahashi	Informational exclusion, Green Paper, and information society in Brazil
Noreena Hertz	Loneliness, surveillance culture, and social erosion
Yuk Hui	Technological modernity and technodiversity as epistemological resistance
González de Gomez	Organisation of knowledge and political consequences of information
Regattieri and Antoun	Algorithmisation of life and mediation of social interactions

Source: Developed by the author

As a limitation, it is worth noting that, being a narrative review, this study did not aim for quantitative exhaustiveness but rather interpretive depth, which opens space for future empirical and comparative research on the topic.

PSYCHOPOLITICAL CONTROL AND ITS ILLUSION OF FREEDOM

Han (2022) highlights that, unlike traditional forms of control, infocracy operates through psychopolitics, controlling not bodies, but minds and behaviours. In this vein, Hui (2022) observes that technological modernity has fostered global synchronicity around a linear vision of progress, where efficiency and utility outweigh local and heterogeneous values. This model, associated with informational monoculture,



transforms modern technologies into tools of control and exclusion, disregarding alternative ways of relating to the world and the Earth. Instead of fostering diversity, the instrumentalised rationality of modernity suppresses pluralities and relegates other forms of existence to an obsolete status.

Information, processed by algorithms and social networks, acts subtly, creating a sensation of freedom and choice, yet in reality restricting options. The author notes that "the freedom to communicate intensely transforms into a means of control" (Han, 2022). This aligns with Capurro's critique (2003), who examines the epistemology of information, observing that the ability to access information is not synonymous with autonomy, as access is mediated by systems of power.

"Information alone does not clarify the world. It can even obscure it. [...] The rapid increase in informational entropy is plunging us into a post-factual society." (Han, 2022, p. 15).

For Takahashi (2000), the information society represents a profound shift in the organisation of society and the economy, ushering in a new technical-economic paradigm.

In Brazil, the impact of this psychopolitics was particularly evident during the 2022 elections, where the use of microtargeting (based on psychographic profiles collected from social networks) enabled highly segmented and manipulative campaigns. An example is the use of messages tailored to the psychological profile of voters to influence their vote, a phenomenon comparable to the Cambridge Analytica scandal in the USA in 2016. In that case, the company gained access to a large volume of data by launching a psychological testing app on the social network. Facebook users who participated in the test not only provided their personal information to Cambridge Analytica but also shared data related to their friends' profiles (VERGILI, 2022).

This exposed how the psychopolitical control described by Han (2022) manifests in practice: voters feel they are making free decisions, when in reality, their behaviours are guided by carefully crafted stimuli.

Information Science (IS), by investigating systems of information organisation and access, as discussed by Abril (1997) and Capurro (2003), reveals that psychopolitical manipulation occurs due to a lack of transparency in the algorithms that determine what



people see and consume. This control allows large corporations and politicians to influence public opinion without the necessary accountability. In this sense, psychopolitical control poses a significant threat to citizens' informational autonomy.

Erosion of the public sphere and the Collapse of Democratic Discourse

Habermas had previously identified the public sphere as the arena where democratic discourse occurs and ideas are debated rationally. However, in an infocracy, this public sphere fragments, transforming into multiple informational bubbles (Han, 2022).

In the era of infocracy, we are immersed in "infomania," where constant communication dematerialises the world and transforms things into non-things. This transition to the age of information, or non-things, makes the world increasingly incomprehensible and fragmented, contributing to the creation of these informational bubbles that isolate individuals in spaces where only their own ideas are reinforced (Han, 2022).

Power in infocracy does not manifest through visible surveillance, but rather through incessant communication, which fragments society into small, isolated groups. This erosion, also discussed by Regattieri and Antoun (2018), creates an environment where citizens are not exposed to divergent viewpoints, limiting the possibility of coherent public debates (Han, 2017).

This scenario is exacerbated by the constant circulation of information which, instead of generating clarity, contributes to social disorientation, as seen in the "infodemic," where the massive flow of false and contradictory information has intensified informational chaos (Han, 2022).

According to data from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO, 2020, p. 4): "around 550 million tweets contained terms related to COVID-19 in March, with a peak at the beginning of the pandemic in the USA, of which 35% came from the United States, followed by Brazil (6%)."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Brazil experienced a true infodemic, where



contradictory and false information about the virus spread rapidly, exacerbating informational chaos. Groups that believed in conspiracy theories about the virus's origin or vaccine effects isolated themselves in their digital bubbles, reinforcing mistaken beliefs that had serious consequences for public health. "People may feel anxious, depressed, overwhelmed, and emotionally exhausted due to the excess of contradictory information, which impairs decision-making." (PAHO, 2020, p. 3).

In this context, Han (2022) observes that the disintegration of the public sphere weakens the democratic process, preventing citizens from engaging in dialogue and seeking collective solutions to common problems.

Within this same line of thought, Takahashi argues that "greater access to information can lead to more democratic societies and social relations, but it can also generate a new logic of exclusion, accentuating existing inequalities and exclusions." (Takahashi, 2000, p. 33).

To reinforce Han's ideas about the disintegration of social connections and informational bubbles, Noreena Hertz's book *The Lonely Century* offers complementary observations. For Hertz (2021), the impact of isolation and social erosion is exacerbated by economic and technological factors that, by fostering a "culture of self" instead of a "culture of us," encourage competition and undermine the sense of community. She suggests that "neoliberalism has made us see ourselves as competitors, not collaborators; consumers, not citizens" (Hertz, 2021).

In this scenario, it is incumbent upon Information Science to help understand how the disintegration of the public sphere is related to the way information is organised and disseminated. Han (2022) complements this view by highlighting that digital surveillance permeates daily life imperceptibly, disguised as convenience, as in the case of smart homes, which, by performing all tasks, trap their inhabitants within a system of digital control (Han, 2022).

For Capurro (2003), information has a material and social character, being shaped by institutions and power structures. This means that the ways information is distributed, for example, through algorithms, can either promote or weaken democratic discourse. The erosion of the public sphere, therefore, is not merely a technical issue, but also a political and epistemological one (Han, 2017).



FAKE NEWS, MEME WARS, AND THE PHENOMENON OF THE ALGORITHMISATION OF LIFE

One of the most concerning characteristics of infocracy is the replacement of rational discourse with emotional stimuli, such as memes and fake news. According to Frohmann (2008), information in the digital age is often consumed superficially, transformed into a fast-consuming product, while Regattieri and Antoun (2018) highlight that algorithms have come to mediate the interaction between humans and machines, transforming daily life into automated processes.

For Han (2022), infocracy is an expression of the performance society and total exposure, where everything must be transparent and visible. The excess of information does not enlighten but "blinds" people, obscuring the truth. Fake news, in this context, has a "higher affective potential than truth," as it is designed to generate instant emotional reactions, making it highly shareable. PAHO points out that "in the information age, this phenomenon is amplified by social networks and spreads more rapidly, like a virus." (PAHO, 2020, p. 2).

Han (2016) states that, in the transparency society, the "negative" is suppressed, with a logic of positivity prevailing that reduces the space for critical and dialogical thought. This is reflected in political processes, where communication is reduced to slogans and impactful images, rather than promoting complex debates.

This phenomenon was particularly relevant in Brazil, where the 2022 political campaigns were marked by a "meme war," in which the focus was on mobilising the electorate through short, provocative visual messages, rather than promoting a deep debate on public policies (O Globo, 2022). As Han observes, the "transparency society" exalts visibility and immediacy, creating an atmosphere where emotion is amplified and reason is relegated to the background.

During this period, WhatsApp and other platforms were inundated with fake news, from false information about electronic voting machines to conspiracy theories about candidates. For Han (2016), digital platforms do not promote dialogue but exacerbate superficiality and the repetition of information, as "there is no true



communication, only exposure." This transforms the public sphere into a spectacle, where citizens no longer interact as rational subjects but consume and reproduce pre-fabricated narratives.

The effect was an increase in social polarisation, creating an atmosphere of mistrust and hostility. For Gonzáles de Gomez (2006), the political consequences of information are profound, and when the informational flow is controlled by a few, democracy is at risk.

The meme war and the spread of fake news are manifestations of how infocracy undermines democratic processes by prioritising emotional manipulation over rational debate. Han emphasises that the manipulation of information intensifies in the digital age because "transparency creates conformity" (Han, 2016), and social networks tend to reinforce existing opinions rather than foster diversity of perspectives.

For Regattieri and Antoun (2018), social networks, which should act as platforms for dialogue and the exchange of ideas, have transformed into arenas of informational battle, where polarised groups isolate themselves in bubbles. The concept of the "filter bubble," coined by Eli Pariser, is directly linked to Han's critique of the transparency society. Han (2016) argues that the logic of algorithms generates an "informational homogeneity" where differences are eliminated and only what confirms pre-existing beliefs is visible. This leads to the erosion of the public sphere and prevents true pluralistic debate.

In the context of the 2022 elections, digital bubbles contributed to political radicalisation in Brazil. Candidates and parties used microtargeting techniques to send personalised messages to different groups of voters, often with no factual basis. This further fragmented the electorate, preventing a broad and rational public debate from occurring.

During the pandemic, digital bubbles disseminated misinformation about the virus and vaccines, compromising disease containment efforts and exacerbating the public health crisis. Capurro (2003) and Abril (1997) warn that the manipulation of information for political purposes is not just a matter of fake news, but of how knowledge is structured and organised in a society. Han, in turn, warns that the transparency society, by turning everything into data and exposing all aspects of life,



transforms truth itself into a market commodity, compromising individuals' capacity for critical discernment.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES: INFORMATION SCIENCE AS A DEMOCRATIC TOOL

In light of the challenges posed by infocracy, it becomes imperative to explore forms of resistance that reinforce democratic values and promote informational transparency.

Frohmann (2008) suggests that an effective response must involve strengthening the public sphere, which can be achieved through practices of curating reliable information and promoting media literacy. This literacy should equip citizens with critical skills to discern the veracity of information and the emotional manipulation that often accompanies it.

In line with this, Takahashi (2000, p. 34) points out that "competence is needed to transform information into knowledge. Education is the key element for the construction of an information society [...]".

For Gonzáles de Gomez (2006), the issue is not limited to how information is disseminated, but also to how it is organised and accessed by citizens. Therefore, it is fundamental for libraries and information institutions to adopt an active role in the curation and organisation of knowledge. The implementation of categorisation and indexing systems that prioritise the quality and reliability of information can facilitate access to relevant and trustworthy data. This can be complemented by the use of technological tools that promote the transparency of algorithms used in information dissemination platforms, allowing citizens to understand how their online interactions influence the information they receive.

Building a robust public sphere, where information is accessible, critical, and verified, is vital for strengthening democracy. To this end, information scientists must collaborate with educators, policymakers, and civil society in developing programmes that encourage critical thinking and open discussion. Educational initiatives that promote the critical analysis of social media and the information circulating within them can create a more conscious public, less susceptible to disinformation.



Furthermore, the use of collaborative platforms for fact-checking can be an effective strategy. Such platforms could be powered by experts and engaged citizens, fostering an environment of co-creation of knowledge. This would not only help dismantle informational bubbles but also create a support network where verified information is widely shared.

The active participation of librarians and information scientists becomes even more crucial in this scenario. They have the capacity to play a central role in mediating between information and the citizen, acting as curators and educators. This involves promoting information literacy that goes beyond mere access, but also includes a critical understanding of the sources, contexts, and impacts of consumed information. The creation of training programmes and workshops that address the importance of information verification and the fight against fake news is a fundamental step.

Finally, a deeper engagement with public policies governing information and communication should be pursued. Advocating for legislation that promotes transparency in data practices and regulates the use of algorithms on digital platforms is essential. This could involve the creation of committees including representatives from civil society, researchers, and IS experts, who can evaluate and propose policies that ensure a fairer and more balanced informational ecosystem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research aimed to understand the impacts of infocracy, as conceptualised by Byung-Chul Han, on individual autonomy and the erosion of the public sphere, particularly within the recent Brazilian political and social context. A critical review of the literature, along with an analysis of events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 elections, reveals how algorithm-mediated information flows have become powerful tools of social and political control, often masked under the guise of freedom of choice and data abundance.

The results indicate that the exercise of power in contemporary times has shifted from physical and institutional control to a logic of psychopolitical domination, where information operates as a tool for surveillance, segmentation, and manipulation. Han (2022) observes that this form of control acts on minds and affects, shaping behaviours



through constant exposure to stimuli carefully orchestrated by algorithmic systems. This dynamic was especially evident in the 2022 Brazilian electoral campaigns, marked by the intensive use of microtargeting, which allowed for the dissemination of highly personalised messages, tailored to the psychographic profiles of voters, compromising broad and pluralistic democratic debate.

Another relevant finding relates to the erosion of the public sphere into digital bubbles, as discussed by Han and by authors such as Regattieri and Antoun (2018). The algorithmic personalisation of content, based on users' Browse and interaction history, isolates individuals in homogeneous informational environments, where pre-existing beliefs and opinions are constantly reinforced. This isolation significantly reduces contact with divergent perspectives and compromises rational dialogue – an essential element for the vitality of democracies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this tendency was intensified by the widespread dissemination of misinformation about the virus and vaccines, amplified by social networks, which weakened public health efforts and fostered social polarisation.

The meme war and the proliferation of fake news highlight the predominance of emotional manipulation over critical reasoning in the era of infocracy. As pointed out by Frohmann (2008) and Han (2016), the logic of immediate visibility, constant exposure, and accelerated communication transforms information into spectacle. In this scenario, truth is often superseded by what generates greater affective engagement. Memes and short visual messages replace argumentation, promoting superficial and polarised communication. In Brazil, platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram were widely used to disseminate false content with strong emotional appeal, contributing to the intensification of political polarisation and large-scale disinformation.

The infodemic, characterised by an excess of contradictory and unverified information, also played a decisive role in exacerbating the informational crisis. According to the Pan American Health Organization (2020), the massive volume of COVID-19 related content created a chaotic environment, making conscious decision-making difficult. Han (2022) argues that an excess of data does not clarify but obscures reality, leading to cognitive exhaustion and the collapse of discernment. The so-called burnout society is, therefore, not just a philosophical metaphor but a concrete condition



produced by the constant pressure for productivity, surveillance, and permanent updating.

The analysis of the results further reinforces the central role of Information Science in addressing the challenges posed by infocracy. By investigating the modes of information organisation, access, and circulation, the field offers fundamental tools for promoting a more ethical, critical, and inclusive public sphere. Authors such as Capurro (2003), Takahashi (2000), and Gonzáles de Gomez (2006) highlight the importance of informational curation, media literacy, and the formulation of public policies that ensure transparency in algorithmic systems. Although the study adopted a theoretical rather than an empirical approach, it contributes significantly to the understanding of contemporary informational processes and provides subsidies for future applied research in educational and institutional settings.

Given this scenario, it becomes urgent to foster initiatives for critical education aimed at the use of digital media, regulate the functioning of platforms, and strengthen the role of libraries, schools, and public institutions as spaces for mediation and collaborative knowledge production. Confronting the effects of infocracy is not merely a technical challenge, but above all a political and educational one. Building active informational citizenship, capable of understanding manipulation mechanisms and acting consciously in the public sphere, is essential to restore the conditions for democratic debate and counter the processes of social erosion caused by algorithmic control.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The analysis of infocracy proposed by Byung-Chul Han, in conjunction with concepts from Information Science (IS), reveals a new dynamic of social control that shifts from the physical to the digital, where power is exercised through the manipulation of informational and psychopolitical flows. Han (2022) exposes how the invisible surveillance permeating the digital world transforms freedom into an illusion, masking the true forms of domination exerted by algorithms that filter the content we consume and reinforce our pre-existing beliefs.

In the era of infocracy, access to information, far from being a path to autonomy,



is a channel of control, where algorithms create digital bubbles that fragment the public sphere. Regattieri and Antoun (2018) observe that this erosion is exacerbated by algorithmic personalisation, which isolates citizens in closed informational environments, reducing opportunities for plural and rational public debate. This phenomenon is especially evident in democratic contexts, such as Brazil, where the 2022 elections and the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the risks of disinformation amplified by these digital bubbles.

The use of fake news, viral memes, and microtargeting campaigns exemplifies how modern politics has been instrumentalised by technologies that prioritise emotion over rational discourse, as Han (2022) describes. The "transparency society" promotes total exposure, where the incessant circulation of information does not illuminate the truth but obscures it, replacing deep debate with instant emotional stimuli. Frohmann (2008) and Capurro (2003) warn that when information is shaped by power structures, it becomes an instrument of manipulation, restricting citizens' ability to develop critical thought.

The erosion of the public sphere represents one of the greatest challenges for contemporary democracies. As described by Han (2022), algorithmic personalisation isolates individuals in informational bubbles, eliminating the possibility of true dialogue and thus polarising society. This isolation has led to the erosion of democratic discourse in Brazil, where the health crisis and political divisions resulted in a radicalised and misinformed electorate.

Given these challenges, the necessary interventions to reverse the effects of infocracy should focus on three main areas: media literacy, algorithmic transparency, and informational curation. Critical media literacy is fundamental for citizens to understand how information is manipulated and how algorithms shape what they consume. Furthermore, it is crucial to promote transparency in the algorithms that govern digital platforms, holding companies accountable for how they use user data to influence behaviours.

Finally, the curation of reliable information must be reinforced as a countermeasure to disinformation. Information Science plays a vital role in curating and disseminating trustworthy, accessible knowledge, creating more robust informational



environments where citizens can access trustworthy data and participate in public debates more informed. Han (2022) highlights that resistance to digital control is not merely a technical issue but a struggle for the preservation of autonomy and freedom of choice.

Thus, by analysing the epistemological and political aspects of information, Information Science offers a solid foundation for confronting the challenges of infocracy and proposing solutions aimed at preserving the integrity of democratic discourse in a scenario of increasing erosion and uncertainty.

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