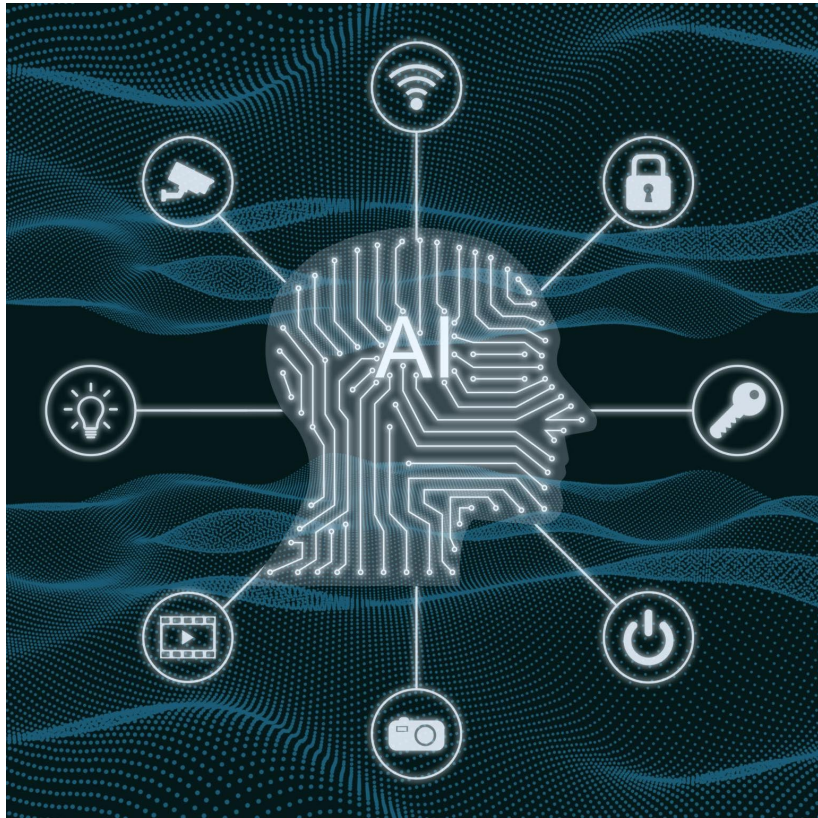

THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISINFORMATION ON DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

Understanding risks to fair and free democratic systems

By Riccardo Capecchi – Fondazione Lottomatica

1) INTRODUCTION: : UNDERSTANDING THE STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION



AI's Societal Impact

AI and digital technologies profoundly transform human behavior and societal institutions worldwide.

Digital Revolution in Public Discourse

Digital revolution reshapes public discourse, influencing how information is produced and shared.

Challenges of Digital Ecosystems

Speed and engagement often overshadow truth, affecting accuracy and accountability in digital media.

Consequences for Democracy

Unchecked disinformation erodes trust, harms electoral integrity, and undermines democratic rights.

2) THE ABSTENTIONISM TRAP



❑ **Reduced Representativeness:**

Low turnout creates governments elected by minorities, fueling a vicious cycle of apathy and mistrust.

❑ **Rise of Extremism:**

Low turnout can favor extremist forces, amplifying organized groups while leaving moderate positions underrepresented.

➤ **Instability:**

Finally, poor electoral participation contributes to political and economic instability, hindering development and investment.

3) BACK TO 2019: AGCOM FIRST REPORT ONLINE DISINFORMATION



Rise of Online Disinformation

2019 saw a significant 10% increase in disinformation, mostly affecting news and politics.

Technological Evolution

Social media platforms and AI content generation have grown exponentially in recent years.

Governance Challenges

Rapid tech changes have outpaced regulations, creating gaps exploited by malicious actors.

Need for Adaptive Policies

Forward-looking policies are essential to manage technological innovation and its social impact.

4) ALGORITHMIC GATEKEEPING AND FILTER BUBBLES



Algorithmic Gatekeepers

Social media platforms and search engines replace editors, prioritizing engagement over accuracy.

Filter Bubbles Effect

Users see content that reinforces existing beliefs, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives.

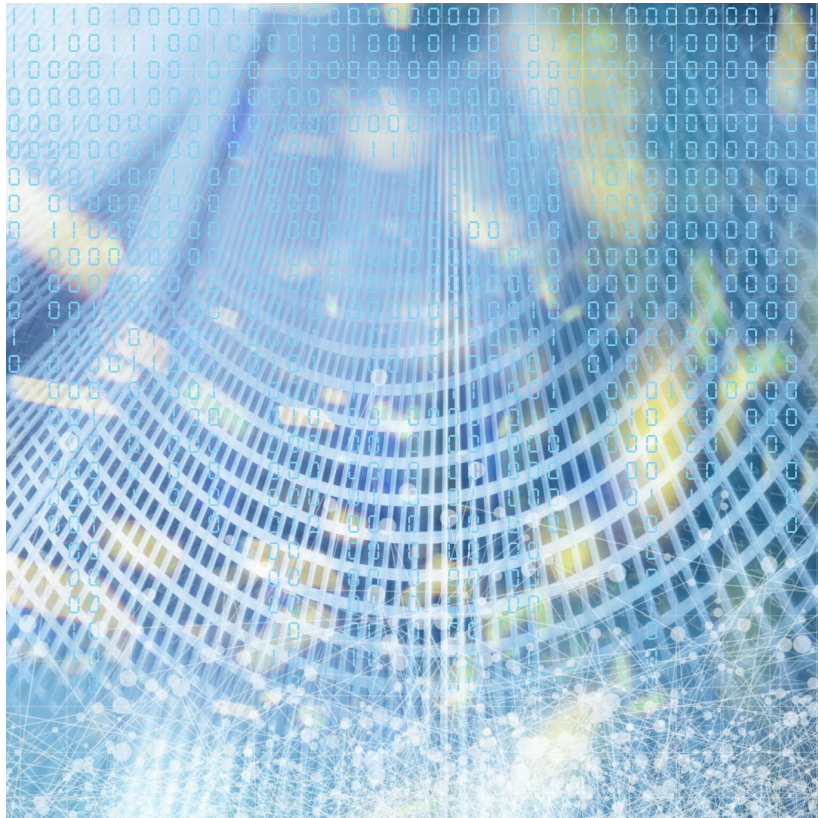
Micro-targeting in Politics

Political communication uses granular personal data targeting, influencing voter behavior.

Impact on Democracy

Echo chambers and manipulative practices distort informed electorate and transparency.

5) EMERGING RISKS FROM AI-DRIVEN MANIPULATION



Evolution of Disinformation

AI has transformed disinformation into complex, multimodal content that spreads widely and quickly.

Threat of Deepfakes

Deepfakes create realistic synthetic audio and video, posing significant risks for political manipulation.

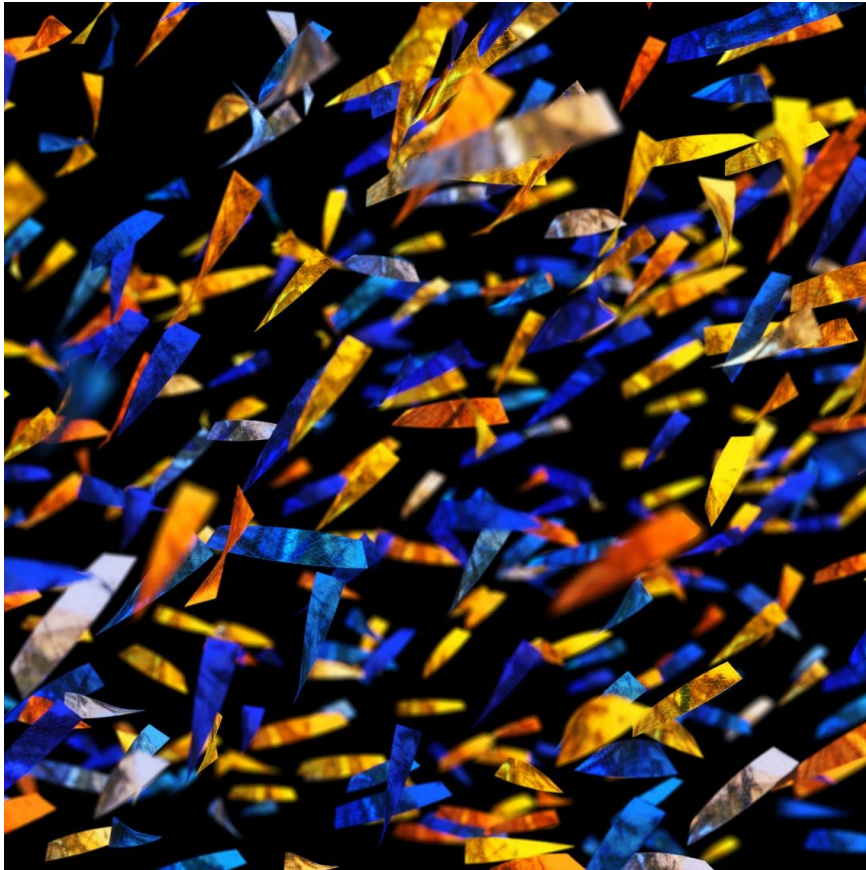
Health Risks from False Narratives

False medical information fueled by AI undermines public health and endangers lives.

Impact on Democracy

AI-driven disinformation threatens democratic processes by spreading undetectable falsehoods rapidly.

6) IMPACT ON SOCIAL COHESION AND INSTITUTIONS



Disinformation and Polarization

Disinformation fuels polarization by prioritizing extreme content, eroding trust and fostering hostility among groups.

Institutional Paralysis

Extreme polarization undermines political compromise, causing institutional gridlock and ineffective governance.

Vulnerabilities in Justice and Security

Opaque AI and foreign digital campaigns threaten fairness in justice and national security stability.

7) RISKS VS MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE



Response Tools: Regulation, Technology, and Culture

- Regulation:
 - Technological Solutions:
 - Education and Media Literacy
 - Impact on Social Cohesion and Institutions
-

8) STATEMENTS & LEGAL FRAMEWORK



REGULATORY, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND CULTURAL SOLUTIONS

Regulatory Frameworks

Regulations like the Digital Services Act promote transparency and accountability in online platforms and AI applications.

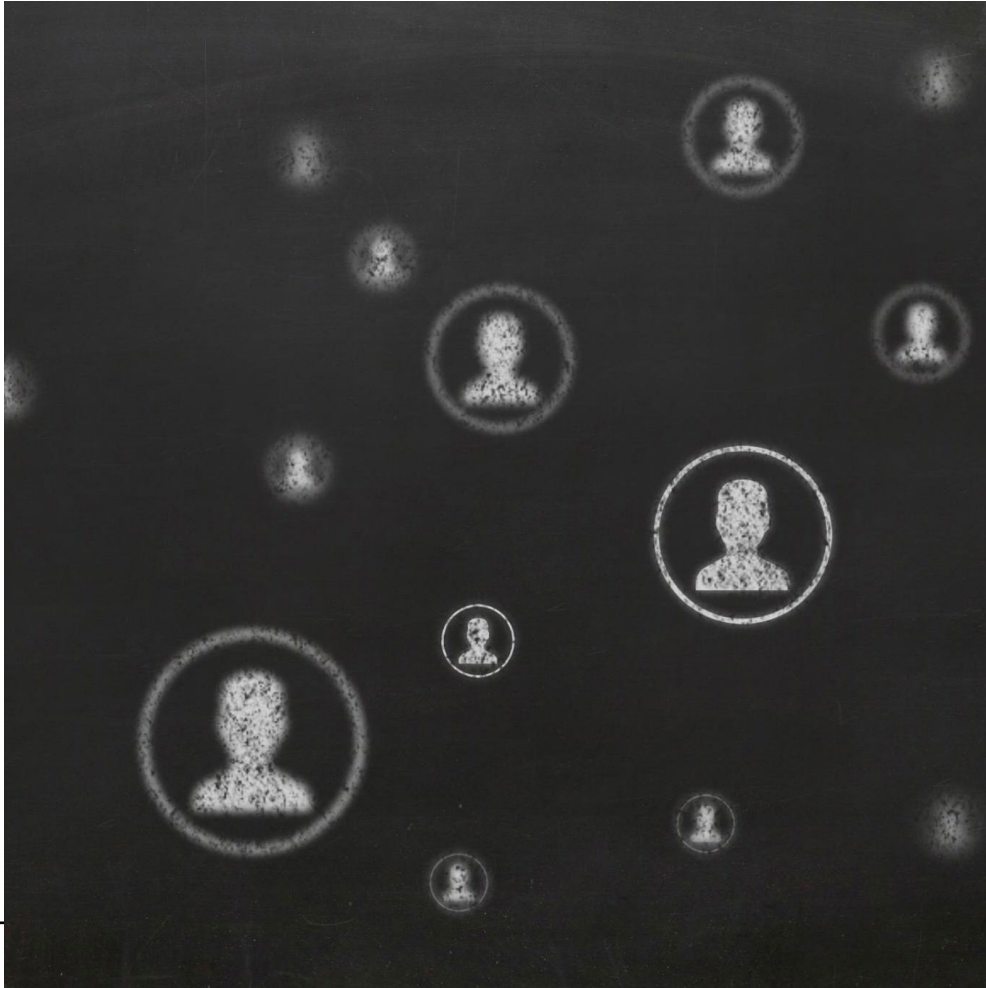
Technological Defenses

AI tools detect and mitigate deepfakes and synthetic media while minimizing over-censorship and bias.

Cultural and Educational Measures

Digital literacy education empowers citizens to critically evaluate information and resist disinformation manipulation.

9) FINAL REMARKS: A POLITICAL VIEW



BALANCING GOVERNANCE AND INNOVATION. HOW?

Transparency and Accountability

Platforms must embrace transparency and independent audits to ensure responsible governance and accountability in technology use.

Risks and Opportunities of AI

While AI poses risks like disinformation, it also offers opportunities to strengthen democratic processes and civic engagement.

Ethical Governance for Inclusivity

Prioritizing ethical governance and inclusive practices can empower citizens and safeguard democracy through technology.
