Article

Publicity and Transparency

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Abstract

Publicity and transparency are two foundational ideas about the proper structure of democratic communication. In a context of utterly transformed public discourse, it is time to rethink the value of these concepts and especially their relationship to one another. This special issue aims to test prevailing assumptions about these terms as they are reshaped in the present era of organized promotional culture. To begin, the present introduction recasts the concepts of publicity and transparency as tools for analyzing and organizing communicative power rather than as normative ideals in their own right. To this end, we present three core arguments for rethinking transparency and publicity today. First, all acts of transparency entail a redistribution of communicative power but not an inherently egalitarian or democratic one. Second, publicity is the central means by which transparency distributes communicative power. And third, scholars must analyze transparency, like publicity, as a professionalized and industrialized field. By centering questions of power and practice, this special issue aims to animate a research agenda attentive to the relational character of both transparency and publicity in hopes of foregrounding the ways the concepts might be used in service of more equitable political alignments.

In the contemporary era of "disrupted" public spheres (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018), "fractured" democracies (Entman & Usher, 2018), "organized social media manipulation" (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017), and "networked disinformation" (Ong & Cabañes, 2018), it is time to rethink some basic precepts of public communication. This special issue takes up the challenge posed by these critics to rework concepts of communication and develop methods of research that can adequately account for the habits and

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systems of contemporary politics. We focus here on the nexus of *publicity* and *transparency*, two foundational ideas about the proper structure of democratic communication, and show how they are being reshaped in our moment.

The need to rethink these particular concepts is best evidenced by the semantic knots in which they have been tied. It is rare, after all, for a pair of words to act as synonyms, antonyms, and frequent collocations, but "publicity" and "transparency" seem to have earned this uncommon distinction. At times, their meanings are relatively interchangeable, alluding to visibility and a given actor's will to anoint particular knowledge as worthy of attention. While scholars have tended to avoid this total conceptual elision, they often present these terms as symbiotic conditions for democratic discourse. It is in this sense that public sphere theorizing has long embraced "publicity and transparency for the deliberative process" (Habermas, 2006, p. 413), advancing these twinned concepts as vehicles for the legitimacy of collective decisions.

Publicity and transparency may also ring in our ears as antithetical, however, especially if we are attuned to their normative connotations. Transparency is lauded as a moral good and democratic necessity, while publicity can imply self-interest, conjuring thoughts of advertising spectacle or public relations spin. In such appraisals, transparency is framed as a necessary condition for reining in the excesses of publicity work. More pointedly, the *lack* of transparency in public discourse is viewed as a central political problem of our time. Recent scholarly studies of fake news (Albright, 2017; Blanding, 2018), front groups (Bertók, 2009; Lyon & Maxwell, 2004; Palenchar & Fitzpatrick, 2009), and social media bots (Ford et al., 2016) have echoed this premise, lauding transparency as a means for taming the runaway force of promotional actors.

These seemingly opposite visions of transparency's relationship to publicity actually share a great deal of common ground. Whether as publicity's partner or its normative overseer, transparency is framed as an equalizer in public discourse. It is presented as an impartial force that corrects power imbalances or, at the very least, renders them visible. As Claire Birchall (among others) has revealed, the potency of the transparency concept is that it acts as "a cultural signifier of neutrality. It is seen as not having a particular quality in and of itself but as, rather, merely the invisible medium through which content is brought to our attention" (Birchall, 2014, p. 81). In much theorizing, transparency seems to sit above the political fray.

We begin this special issue from the premise that a value-neutral conceptual framing of transparency is divorced from all actually existing systems of politics and publicity. In practice, every revelation is done in accordance with the aims, constraints, blind spots, routines, whims, or license of actors. As Flyverbom (2015) suggests, "transparency is always entangled with other concerns" (p. 177). Because transparency is always-already enmeshed in relationships of power, it is often performed strategically. It may act as a cudgel in acrimonious political campaigns, as organizations publicly attack the opacity of their opponents. Conversely, it is sometimes deployed as a form of consensus or compromise, advocated as a managerial, rather than adversarial, approach to resolving contentious issues (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2020). Most important—and least explored in recent scholarship—transparency can itself be

appropriated as a publicity tactic. Corporations advertise their own charitable giving to boost their brands; politicians hold press conferences to announce the release of their personal tax filings; and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) collectively fund transparency awards, publicizing their own victories. The ends of transparency, then, are various: It is employed as a political tool, a moral attitude, and a supposedly preinterpretive form of information provision.

Unravelling the contingency of transparency's normative standing demands empirics. It requires looking at particular actors, media systems, cultural contexts, and communicative acts. Taking up the challenge offered by Bennett and Pfetsch (2018), our objective with this special issue is to "develop concepts and methods aimed more at explaining contemporary politics than confirming the canon of ideas that emerged from an earlier era of democracy and society" (p. 247). Publicity and transparency are put to work in patterned ways, and it is our aim to begin identifying these patterns in their historicized forms.

The articles in this special issue, each in their own way, set themselves to this task. In support of this aim, this introduction will begin by laying some conceptual groundwork for the study of publicity and transparency. We will then advance three core arguments about the relationship between transparency and publicity:

- All acts of transparency entail a redistribution of communicative power, but not an inherently egalitarian or democratic one.
- Publicity is the central means by which transparency distributes communicative power.
- Scholars must analyze transparency, like publicity, as a professionalized and industrialized field.

Together, we intend these points to recast the concepts of publicity and transparency as tools for analyzing and organizing communicative power rather than as normative ideals in their own right. We will close by presenting the issue's articles, underscoring the thematic linkages among the pieces, and advancing a research agenda that may continue to build from their insights.

Perspectives on Organized Publicity

As a technology of power and influence, publicity today is both institutionalized within organizational arrangements (companies, governments, NGOs, social movements, political parties) and distributed throughout decentralized settings. In its most traceable professional forms, organized publicity constitutes a center of economic activity: Globally, advertising is a US$579 billion industry, while public relations constitutes a $15 billion sector in its own right. Add to these expenditures on lobbying, marketing, branding, and direct sales, and the economic scope of professional publicity expands further still.

Although not so neatly measurable, the aggregate, unintended, and sociocultural effects of promotion are equally ubiquitous. The norms of professionalized publicity

provide materials with which people fashion their day-to-day lives, inflecting self-expression, communication within communities, and the ways in which people understand themselves as a polity (Davis, 2013; Wernick, 1991).

Traditionally, publicity work has been divided into somewhat siloed fields. Advertising, public relations, and lobbying, for instance, have held distinct responsibilities within organizations. As professions, they have developed their own norms, professional groups, ethical codes, salary expectations, educational programs, subfields, and realms of expertise. Although broadly tasked with promoting an organization's interests, each has historically been afforded a purview of its own.

Today, these long-standing divisions are in a state of flux, if not outright dissolution. Increasingly, promotional activities are viewed as components of a cohesive organizational strategy rather than discrete tasks. The phrase "strategic communication" has emerged within both promotional and academic discourse as an umbrella term for this shift, denoting all communicative activities an organization undertakes to advance its mission (Hallahan et al., 2007; Manheim, 2011; Werder, 2015; Zerfass et al., 2018). Strategic communication encompasses not only the publicity-garnering circulation of external messages but also the internal organizational labor that makes these possible (Falkheimer & Heide, 2014).

To some extent, the rhetorical turn toward "strategic communication" is a ploy by promotional industries to rebrand their work. Just as publicity professionals once abandoned the term *propagandist* as it developed negative connotations (Ewen, 1996), practitioners today may wish to unburden themselves of terms like *public relations*, using *strategic communication* as a relatively unsullied alternative. Scholars ought not reflexively parrot the self-definitions of publicity professionals, however; we argue it behooves researchers to develop a critical lexicon capable of thinking through publicity as interwoven sets of practices rather than discrete subindustries. Doing so responds not only to changing modes of production but also to the realities of publicity's consumption. Audiences do not experience a single advertisement or public relations message in isolation. Rather, they encounter them amid flows of other media content (R. Williams, 1974) and make sense of messages through the prism of their social lives. As Hallahan et al. (2007) argue, "It is increasingly questionable whether the effects of any particular communication activity can be validly examined in isolation" (p. 10). Thus, studying publicity across fields offers a methodological approach consonant with the ways publics encounter strategic messages.

Thinking of publicity across domains also brings the common practices of professionals into stark relief. While research has produced expansive bodies of literature analyzing promotional texts and the effect these texts have on audiences, the labor of promotion is often treated as a banal constant or an external variable. These actors, however, perform as promotional intermediaries, brokering relationships between elites and their publics (Hodges & Edwards, 2014; Kantola, 2016). As with publicity itself, this brokerage is not neutral: Intermediaries create, shape, and influence discourse by framing markets, organizations, and subjectivities in ways that appear commonsensical while reinforcing vested interests and existing structures of power (Edwards, 2012). While their organizations may compete or conflict, the logics under

which these intermediaries work are often shared. As Aronczyk (2015,) argues, these professionals form a "transnational promotional class," bound not by a self-conscious collective identity but rather via a common motivation "to construct[] and manag[e] international and domestic public opinion as well as the conditions in which public attitudes and values are sought and collected" (p. 2012). Analyzing publicity beyond industry niches allows researchers to understand the fissures and points of unity among this emerging professional class.

Turning an eye toward the convergence of promotional industries has the additional benefit of foregrounding the role of media technologies in structuring both publicity and transparency. Promoters today ply their trade in a media ecology that allows messages to move promiscuously across platforms, often beyond the control of their creators. Paid political advertising may find a second life as shared social media content; a CEO's press conference pronouncements may be repurposed by NGO opponents as fodder for attack ads. The affordances of media technologies blur lines between advertising, public relations, and marketing content, demanding a conceptual approach to publicity that examines communication holistically, rather than through the narrow lens of a single promotional profession.

Finally, it is important to recognize how the convergence of promotional substance and style has been not only horizontal—across fields—but also vertical, from organization to individual. At the conjuncture of social media platforms, entrepreneurial regimes, and decentralized political discourse, we find injunctions to individuals in various capacities (citizens, users, consumers) to seek status or spur action through self-promotion. These practices generate collective engagement as well as emerging labor forms—influencer, microcelebrity, "content" creator—whose professionalization requires considerable investment in structured and ongoing publicity (Duffy, 2017; Penney, 2017).

The above suggests that conceptualizing publicity as a series of relatively distinct industries is limiting. This approach risks missing shared logics and practices across fields. Instead, we argue for the need to research publicity as sets of logics and practices. This allows us to consider more completely the audiences, experiences, effects, labor, mediations, and emerging patterns in publicity work that supersede particular job titles or industrial categories.

Publicity and Democratic Participation

Scholars who take a managerial or administrative approach to promotional industries have long framed publicity as a "two-way street" by which publics and large organizations may better understand each other (Goldman, 1948). This perspective is given its most influential and full-throated articulation by Grunig and Hunt (1984), who argue that while public relations has often been used as a mouthpiece for elite special interests, communications professionals have the capacity to establish "symmetrical" relationships with publics, premised on mutual learning. Today, such hopes are fueled by the affordances of online technologies, which allow organizations a more immediate and intimate relationship with individuals. Social media, data mining, email, and the

capricious growth of data storage enable organizations to keep sophisticated tabs on the public and tailor their communications on a person-by-person basis (Howard, 2006; Stromer-Galley, 2014). These technologies also offer (at least potentially) platforms for publics to speak back to promotional campaigns, allowing for a more balanced communicative power dynamic than was possible under previous mass media regimes (Turow, 2013; B. A. Williams & Delli Carpini, 2011).

As L'Etang and Pieczka (2006) argue, however, the two-way street model of promotion is still a far cry from the normative demands of democratic discourse. Publicity agents generally work toward predetermined ends—profit, election, or an NGO's core mission—and are unable to reformulate their underlying aims. As Miller and Dinan (2007) suggest, the essential function of promotional intermediaries is "to attempt to align the sectional interests of their principals (employers or clients) with general interests. As public and private interests are not the same, this must of necessity involve manipulation and deception" (p. 13). In this view, publicity is never symmetrical, and professional promotional industries serve only to exacerbate existing power imbalances.

Despite these critiques, the valorization of transparent citizen participation remains an ideological cornerstone of much publicity work. Professionals strive for "public engagement" as a means to lend a patina of authenticity to their causes. Surveys, focus groups, town hall meetings, and online feedback portals are just some of the ways large institutions aim to prompt communication with citizens in everyday contexts. In practice, however, elites may use participatory forums to manage supporters' voices, relying on public engagement as legitimizing spectacle rather than politically efficacious talk (Lee, 2014). While participation is typically presented as a means to flatten social hierarchies and redistribute power, it may in practice entrench existing inequalities (Lee et al., 2015), or simply allow elites to ventriloquize through their assembled publics (Schneider et al., 2016). Publicizing new voices, in other words, is not inherently democratizing. In the absence of a redistribution of decision-making power, either within an organization or across a polity, participation may provide license for special interests to continue pursuing their agendas under the guise of the public interest.

Promoting Transparency

Transparency is often framed as a remedy to publicity's failings. It volunteers a bulwark against corruption, or at least a means for publics to see the ways in which the public sphere has become instrumentalized. This has driven transparency to become not only a foundational political value within several countries (Florini, 2007) but also a transnationally shared belief that ostensibly allows for collective striving toward a more "open society" across borders (Holzner & Holzner, 2006). While transparency's ascension as seemingly universal political good is historically recent (Ball, 2009; Schudson, 2015), the concept is nonetheless deeply embedded in contemporary political discourses and popular notions of collective governance. As outlined above, the valorization of transparency is particularly acute in scholarly work on the role of

publicity in democracy, with transparency often viewed as a domesticating force, ensuring promotional interests abide by the democratic norms of the public sphere.

While a robust literature traces the growing imbrication of deliberative democratic theory and transparency, a parallel body of research emphasizes the normative short-comings of transparency. Scholars note that transparency may lead to false, incomplete, skewed, or intentionally biased information being selectively released to publics (Ananny & Crawford, 2018; Crain, 2018); the widespread adoption of transparency norms may flood publics with a surfeit of data, making it more difficult for people to find and parse what is meaningful for their lives (Vaccaro & Madsen, 2009); transparency can act as a rationalization for the circulation of grotesque, unsettling, or stigmatizing material (Nahon-Serfaty, 2019); and transparency norms often put the onus on individuals to seek out and interpret important information, resting on neoliberal notions of political agency that stunt collective action (Birchall, 2014; Nadesan, 2011). Perhaps most damning are cases wherein transparency is "weaponized" for purposes of political expediency, insisting on specific methods of validation or forms of evidence that conform to strategic rather than truth-based goals (Levy & Johns, 2016). Taken in sum, these studies challenge the normative value of transparency per se, or at least call for a clarification of how it contributes to the democratization of public communication.

It is not simply that transparency is sometimes insufficiently expansive or poorly executed. Even acts of transparency that are well intentioned and "work" are not panaceas for the problems of collective politics. Corporations, for instance, are legally mandated to expose their lobbying expenditures in many countries and to identify their paid lobbyists. Such reporting is done in an explicit attempt to curtail potential corruption and to give citizens better insights into how their governments function. Does this, however, allow the polity to curb companies' outsized political influence? Or does it conversely legitimate a now largely transparent exercise of corporate lobbying power? More to the point, does lobbying disclosure lead to policies that are less vulnerable to the influence of large special interests than in previous eras? The answers are, at best, ambivalent. Research tends to show that despite a transnational and transsectoral hailing of transparency's normative utility, "transparency has not provided better governance, and has not rendered governance fully visible" (Fenster, 2015). Even when enacted rigorously and with an eye toward public benefit, transparency is not in and of itself a sufficient tool for advancing a more equitable political life.

Three Core Arguments for Rethinking Transparency and Publicity Today

Transparency ought not be a de facto guiding principle of public discourse. However, this criticism should not sour us entirely on its worth. Although we may need to take transparency off its pedestal, this special issue is an argument for the continued usefulness of transparency as an analytical concept rather than a normative end. While we will allow the insights of our contributors to make this case more robustly, we would

like to advance three related claims about the relationship between transparency and publicity. These fall short of a full theoretical elaboration or empirically verified research program; they are meant instead as provocations, setting a research agenda that others may hone, challenge, or otherwise use to advance understanding of these two key concepts.

First, we assert that *all acts of transparency entail a redistribution of communicative power, but not an inherently egalitarian or democratic one.* Transparency is, at its core, a means of controlling information. It may be done willfully or mandated externally; it may be haphazard or undertaken with the utmost strategy. Acts of transparency are inextricable from existing relationships among those who have cloistered information, those who want it, those who might spread it, and those who might experience benefit or injury from the information's disclosure. This web is rarely symmetrical, and almost always involves actors with unequal economic, social, or political power. Any act of transparency is a means of organizing this power; thus, exploring uses of transparency helps clarify the ways revelation might constrain the excesses of elites, or conversely reinforce their privileges.

Second, we claim that *publicity is the central means by which transparency distributes communicative power.* As Ball (2009) suggests, "Information availability in itself does not create transparency" (p. 300); once revealed, information may sit idly, activate conflicting meanings, or remain structurally or symbolically inaccessible (Stohl et al., 2016). Acts of transparency become legible through the labor of journalists, marketers, social media users, communications professionals, government agencies, and others who view their role as selectively spreading information. To determine whether particular acts of transparency democratize or propagandize requires consideration of publicity work, as well as the institutions and technologies that allow for this labor. Who benefits from transparency and its subsequent publicity? Who controls the timing, scope, and particularities of the information's release and circulation? What audiences have access—nominally or in practice—to the information? How does the concept of transparency itself act as a justification for particular actors to pursue their interests? Where are the conceptual lines between transparency and publicity drawn in different instances, and who is empowered to do this boundary work? Viewing the study of transparency as inseparable from considerations of publicity places necessary emphasis on questions of power and opens up these important lines of inquiry.

Finally, we call for scholars to *analyze transparency, like publicity, as a professionalized and industrialized field.* Scholars would rarely think to study publicity as separate from the economic incentives and professional practices of fields like public relations, advertising, or marketing; yet, transparency is often pondered in abstractions, as though its value lies beyond the sordid details of its enactment. It is in practice, however, that transparency is made productive. The concept has been the justification for new institutions, job titles, services, companies, NGOs, and technologies. It provides the rationale for emerging kinds of work. Research, we argue, must attend to the ways these shifts influence the very conditions of public communication. This special issue explores precisely the ways in which the ideological celebration of transparency shapes the work of promotional labor, and vice versa.

Articles and Contributions

The articles in this collection elucidate varying contemporary alignments of transparency and publicity, and more particularly, the uses to which these alignments are put. The special issue begins with an article by Lee Edwards, who argues that pure transparency and pure publicity are unachievable normative visions. In practice, Edwards shows that transparency and publicity are always coincident and even mutually constitutive, requiring analysis that takes their interconnectedness as a starting point. To this end, Edwards develops a typology of transparency–publicity acts, exploring the different combinations of audiences, contexts, motivations, and interests that shape these concepts in practice. Edwards identifies four core modes of transparency–publicity that, taken together, reveal the need to place these concepts into the context of their elaboration, balancing their normative power with their practical application. Edwards's contribution recognizes the interplay of theory and practice in developing definitional precision and analytical toolkits for future research.

Following Edwards, the issue turns to a series of studies exploring transparency and publicity in different realms of social and political life. Caroline Lee begins by examining universities' transparency initiatives. Ostensibly aimed at democratizing institutions of higher learning and connecting campuses to outside communities, transparency initiatives also act as the impetus for a cottage industry of self-assessment and certification, bent on formalizing transparency procedures. This "endless loop" of transparency, Lee demonstrates, ingrains top-down systems of legitimation in campus life, providing a moral scaffolding on which academic elites build more robust relationships with government and the private sector, potentially challenging the autonomy of postsecondary institutions.

Garrett Broad turns the reader's attention toward the corporate sector, to find that transparency is just as firmly couched in the language of horizontal politics and community outreach as it is on university campuses. Taking Brooklyn-based indoor agriculture company Square Roots as a case study, Broad investigates how corporations have responded to widely publicized breakdowns in food supply chains and a paucity of consumer trust by making transparency a key component of their marketing. By aligning themselves with the rhetoric of social movements for "real food," Broad argues, food producers are able to capitalize on strategic acts of transparency, while offering only limited pathways to addressing the issues of sustainability, health, and localism that are central to their promotional rhetoric.

While Broad examines how companies use transparency strategically to communicate with consumers, Clea Bourne shows it to be equally central to the way businesses communicate with each other. Through a field-level discourse analysis of financial technology (fintech) firms, Bourne argues that fintech companies attract partnerships and bolster their reputations by demonstrating their commitment to contemporary transparency norms. While the rhetorical value of transparency is shared across the financial sector, in practice it is used as a competitive tool, with decades-old financial institutions deploying it to defend their continued relevancy, and new startups positioning themselves as harbingers of a nascent ethic of openness. In all instances,

Bourne shows that claims about transparency are means for businesses to position themselves in contradistinction to competitors. Here we see that even—or especially—in an industry that has been roundly criticized for its opacity, transparency can act as a strategic resource.

The special issue then turns toward more public-facing online platforms via Nora Draper's exploration of online reputation management. Draper examines companies whose services are designed to help individuals safeguard and develop their personal online identities, staving off threats ranging from public embarrassment to identity theft. The article demonstrates that these corporations seek publicity for their services largely through the use of metaphors—digital *doppelgänger*, digital tattoo, and digital footprint—that present the risks of online life as omnipresent, and the solutions to these risks as purchasable. In this way, companies claim to navigate the complexities of personal transparency and publicity online, while also cultivating the very anxieties they purport to ameliorate.

The theme of online anxieties also pervades the issue's next piece, which uses contemporary U.S. legal cases over whether politicians are permitted to block citizens on social media platforms to explore the affordances and risks of online political participation. Presented in the style of a roundtable discussion, participants Sarah Sobieraj, Gina M. Masullo, Philip N. Cohen, Tarleton Gillespie, and Sarah J. Jackson each provide a different take on how politicians' attempts to block individual users might impede or support robust public discourse. The debate raises issues about the role of transparency as a feature of political discourse as well as a principle of media platforms, interrogating the degree to which the premises of open and unfettered interaction between politician and constituent are realized in practice. These scholars also ask whether justifications for blocking users should or should not be made transparent, and how this complicates normative visions for transparency's place in public politics.

The issue's final article takes up this question of transparency's limits, providing an assessment of precisely when we ought not demand transparency from government. Through an exploration of the United States' Freedom of Information Act, as well as its antecedents and repercussions, Michael Schudson argues that governmental transparency must necessarily draw limits based on personal rights to privacy, national security, and instances in which revelation might impede debate within the polity or government itself. This piece argues that transparency ought to be viewed not as a sacrosanct value but as a means toward other political ends.

The case studies addressed in this special issue are drawn from diverse fields of communicative practice. This broad scope purposefully responds to the increasing interconnectedness of promotional industries outlined above. As publicity professions become more integrated, the impetus is on scholars to explore how dominant promotional norms are replicated, altered, rejected, or ignored in various contexts—and more important, why these decisions are made. The collected articles call attention to the often-overlooked agency of those producing and circulating transparency.

In addition to a shared consideration of promotional actors, this special issue coheres methodologically through a collective emphasis on qualitative research. Responding to exhortations from political communication scholars to employ participant observation,

interviews, and process tracing in theory building (Karpf et al., 2015), the authors rely predominantly on qualitative tools. In so doing, the collected works foreground "meaning-making rather than message delivery" in an effort to "explore the processes practitioners use to communicate and circulate norms, values, beliefs, and practices through their involvement across wide-ranging areas of political, social, and cultural life" (Aronczyk et al., 2017, p. 148). By addressing the role of publicity and transparency work within universities, companies, social media platforms, governments, and elsewhere, these articles provide grounded accounts of how transparency is given form.

There is potential for stinging irony when scholars aim to "unveil" the ideological character of transparency. By trusting that revelation will lead to rectification, researchers often enact the very logic they critique, treating divulgence as an automatic contributor to more equitable public discourse. Just as tracing hidden flows of capital, peering into technological black boxes, or unmasking special interests does not automatically create more just political formations, demonstrating the limitations of transparency as a normative vision does not tell us how to create a more democratic public life.

Similarly, it is worth asking what is gained and what is lost in the practice of publicity. In the drive to cast light, bring to the surface, or create social facts, we reinforce certain understandings of politics, discourse, and perspective and foreclose on others. Rather than focusing on "good" and "bad" kinds of publicity, opposing the critical to the manipulative, our aim here is to emphasize that the act of making things public is itself already conditioned by symbolic and material means, shaping our strongly held ideas of what kinds of publicity are required or allowed in the current political era.

With this in mind, the articles in this special issue evaluate not just transparency and publicity—to either tout their normative bona fides or find them sorely lacking— but the uses to which they are put. By centering questions of power and practice, this issue aims to animate a research agenda attentive to the relational character of both transparency and publicity in hopes of foregrounding the ways the concepts might be made or unmade in support of more equitable political alignments.

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