(Cyber) Democracy, from Transparency to Citizen Participation: An Analysis of the Transparency Page of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho and the Governmental Fanpages on Facebook and Instagram

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ABSTRACT

This academic article analyzes the evolution of democracy, highlighting its expansion through digital technologies. Democracy is seen as a continuous process involving citizen participation, deliberation, and transparency, going beyond voting. Throughout history, different models of democracy (direct, representative, and participatory) have consolidated, especially after the French Revolution. In contemporary times, these models expand with the emergence of cyberdemocracy, which uses the internet and social media as tools for expression and social control. This new digital scenario favors greater interactivity between citizens and government, but also presents challenges such as digital exclusion, algorithmic manipulation, and disinformation. Digital communication becomes essential in the formation of citizenship and the political engagement of the population. The new public administration, in turn, is based on principles such as innovation, efficiency, and collaboration, promoting participatory practices with the support of technologies. A practical example, such as the "Prefs" page of the Municipal Government of Curitiba, demonstrates how digital tools can strengthen local democracy. To this end, it is essential to invest in the training of public servants, develop inclusive policies, and foster cooperation between the State and civil society, aiming for a more ethical, responsive, and democratic administration. This article analyzes the transparency portal of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho as a tool for accessing information, in addition to analyzing the participation of cybercitizens in keeping themselves updated on the social media of said Government, seeking active participation on these platforms.

Keywords: Cyberdemocracy; Citizen Participation; Transparency; Facebook; Instagram.

INTRODUCTION

Democracy goes beyond the act of voting, encompassing principles such as freedom, equality, participation, and transparency. It manifests itself in collective coexistence and the right to deliberation, serving as an instrument in the struggle for justice and citizenship.

Although Athenian democracy is often considered the starting point, other civilizations such as Mesopotamia, ancient India, and the Iroquois Confederation already practiced forms of public deliberation. These experiences show that citizen participation has multiple origins and is not limited to the classical Greek model. However, even Athenian democracy, although innovative, was exclusionary, as it was based on the exclusion of women, foreigners, and the maintenance of slave labor. Over time, the French Revolution influenced the development of the three models of democracy: direct, representative, and participatory. Each with its own logic of operation.

Table 1. Types of democracy that emerged from the French Revolution.

TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Direct democracy	Every citizen could participate directly (they could introduce and/or vote on bills equally). The people acted in the legislative and executive branches, but in limited numbers, as not everyone was considered a citizen.
Representative democracy	With the growth of the population educated for a certain civic participation, this emerged with republicanism (15th century in Rome) and parliamentarism (from the 14th century in England), allowing participation indirectly and being carried out through the election of representatives of the legislative and executive powers.
Participatory democracy	It was consolidated in the second half of the 20th century, especially in Latin America, as in Brazil after the 1988 Constitution. It positions itself between direct and representative democracy, promoting the active participation of the population in public decisions through mechanisms such as councils, hearings, plebiscites and referendums, strengthening democratic governance.

Source: Santos (2023)

With the popularization of the internet, the digital public sphere emerged, expanding spaces for deliberation and citizen participation. This new reality gave rise to cyberdemocracy, which combines digital technologies with democratic practices. However, challenges such as digital exclusion, disinformation, and algorithmic manipulation still limit its potential. Communication, based on dialogue and access to information, becomes the foundation of deliberative democracy, promoting political autonomy and strengthening the democratic process in the digital age.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This work adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical approach, grounded in theoretical and documentary research. The methodology is based on a critical review of specialized literature on cyberdemocracy, digital democracy, public transparency, and new public management, using as main authors Gomes (2007; 2011; 2025), Lévy (1999; 2002; 2004; 2011), Landim (2013), Cavalli, Parchen e Freitas (2021), Pies (2022), among others. The analysis is guided by the interpretation of key concepts presented by these authors, focusing on the transformations brought about by Information and Communication Technologies in democratic practices and public administration.

In addition, a documentary analysis of institutional portals is used, with emphasis on the Transparency Portal of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho and the municipal administration's social media channels. This empirical analysis aims to verify how the principles of transparency, accountability, and social participation are manifested in the practice of digital public management. Posts, interactions, and content shared on Municipal Government fan pages and official channels are also observed.

The methodology also includes an analysis of previously established categories, inspired by Pies (2022), namely: transparency, accountability, and social participation. These categories serve as a basis for interpreting the collected data, enabling a critical understanding of the communication dynamics between government and society in the era of cyberdemocracy. Thus, the work aims to articulate theory and practice in order to assess the extent to which digital public management contributes to democratic strengthening, with a focus on active citizenship, digital inclusion, and social control.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The transformation of the traditional public sphere into a more dynamic, decentralized, and accessible digital sphere demands the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in this process. According to Di Felice (2008; 2017; 2018), digital technology is not just an extension of human senses, but an active element of social relations, creating a new type of relational intelligence. Cyberdemocracy is presented as a way to strengthen transparency and citizen participation through the use of these technologies.

Based on authors such as Pierre Lévy and Wilson Gomes, the text demonstrates how digital platforms enable political engagement, access to public data, and influence on public policies. Despite the opportunities, obstacles such as digital exclusion, misinformation, and manipulative algorithms still persist. Cases such as the e-Democracy portal of the Chamber of Deputies and the "Prefs" fan page of the Municipal Government of Curitiba on Facebook exemplify the strategic use of digital communication to promote civic engagement. The study also analyzes the Transparency Portal of Porto Velho, highlighting its potential for participatory management, although with limitations in usability and interaction. Finally, it emphasizes that the full realization of cyberdemocracy depends on digital inclusion, critical media literacy, and cultural changes that favour governance and ethical transparency.

What is Cyberdemocracy?

Cyberdemocracy, also called digital democracy or e-democracy, refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies to expand citizen participation and strengthen democratic principles. Authors such as Lévy (1999; 2002; 2004; 2011) and Gomes (2007; 2011; 2025) discuss the complexity of this concept, which requires both a theoretical understanding of democracy and mastery of digital tools. The central idea is that citizens can, through the internet, influence political decisions, interact with governments, and exercise social control more effectively, collaborating in a participatory and transparent virtual environment.

According to Landim (2013) and Cavalli, Parchen e Freitas (2021), the internet and digital social networks function as spaces for public debate, including for social minorities. These environments foster the formation of virtual communities and the development of collective ideas, which can materialize into concrete actions in the political world. However, for cyberdemocracy to be effective, it is necessary to guarantee universal access to technologies and user training to avoid new forms of digital exclusion.

With the advancement of digital communication, challenges such as the spread of fake news, hate speech, and the manipulation of information by algorithms have also emerged. Freedom of expression in cyberspace can both promote cyberactivism and threaten democracy. Initiatives such as the e-Democracy portal of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies show that digital tools can encourage participation, as long as they are structured with responsibility, security, and clear information.

Transparency, accountability, and social participation are fundamental pillars of cyberdemocracy, as highlighted by Pies (2022). Institutional digital platforms and social networks allow not only the dissemination of administrative acts, but also the monitoring of public spending and the direct involvement of the population in decision-making. Modern public administration must incorporate these mechanisms as an essential part of a democratic administration that is responsive to social demands.

Table 2. Main aspects related to cyberdemocracy

CONCEPTS	FORM OF ANALYSIS
Transparency	Publications or social media that are classified as transparency refer to those related to accountability, actions, and public management activities. In this sense, management transparency is classified as the dissemination of information regarding the actions performed to society at large.

Accountability	Transparency Law No. 131/2009 emphasizes that financial reporting must include information related to revenue and expenses. Expenses must include the actions taken by management in their execution, relating to the process, the goods supplied, and the
	service provided. Revenue receipts must be disclosed.
Social Participation	With the use of digital social networks, social participation occurs through chat, polls, information sharing, forums and comments.

Source: Pies (2022)

Finally, media communication plays a structuring role in shaping the digital public sphere, helping to shape citizenship and influence the political agenda. Studies by Ribeiro, Temer e Tuzzo (2013) and Seto (2024) demonstrate that the circulation of information, when guided by ethics and dialogue, strengthens the exercise of active citizenship. Cyberdemocracy, therefore, is a process in constant construction, requiring critical vigilance, digital inclusion, a commitment to truth, and openness to plural and collaborative public debate.

More Transparent Government Actions

Based on the reflections of authors such as Pierre Lévy (1999; 2002; 2004; 2011) and Ribeiro, Temer e Tuzzo (2013), it is evident that the internet has profoundly transformed the foundations of the public sphere formulated by Habermas. While he conceived of a space mediated by rational and argumentative rules, digital communication has decentralized senders and receivers, fragmented spaces for debate, and accelerated communication flows. This has led to challenges such as the influence of algorithms, the superficiality of interactions, and the multiplicity of partial public spheres, requiring a critical review of the Habermasian model in light of the new dynamics of digital citizenship.

In Brazil, legislation such as Complementary Law No. 131/2009, the Transparency Law, has operationalized the constitutional principles of publicity and social control, promoting the availability of financial data on online platforms. However, access to information is still limited, as many citizens do not use official portals due to their complexity. In contrast, digital social networks are widely accessed, but prioritize informative and educational content, failing to clearly present public spending and investments. This reinforces the importance of more effective communication strategies integrated with popular channels.

Finally, authors such as Lévy (1999; 2002; 2004; 2011) argue that transparency in the digital age should be adopted as a communication logic, both by institutions and by citizens. A culture of transparency requires both defensive practices, such as the voluntary disclosure of data, and offensive practices, such as questioning areas of opacity. Although portals and laws represent progress, the democratization of information will only be complete if there is digital inclusion, active participation of civil society, and conscious use of platforms. Thus, cyberdemocracy is realized in the convergence of access, public dialogue, and continuous social vigilance.

The Municipal Government of Porto Velho seeks fiscal transparency, depending on the actions taken, but it is still insufficient to monitor investments in projects with the population, since digital social networks are the main means of information for users/citizens. The Transparency Portal of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho (https://transparencia.portovelho.ro.gov.br/) presents a robust and organized platform, designed to facilitate public access to public information in a clear and objective manner. The interface features a series of menus and interactive links that serve as navigation tools, allowing users to locate the data of interest (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Start of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho Transparency Portal on November 1st, 2025.

These menus are located at the top of Figure 1, organized thematically and functionally, such as "Administration", "COVID-19", "Online Case Inquiry", "Contracts/Terms", "Agreements and Transfers", "Open Data - APIs", "Education", "Parliamentary Amendments", "Expenses", "Legislation", among others. They redirect citizens to specific sections where they can consult detailed information about public administration. In addition, the platform offers quick access in the "Main Links" section, where there are items such as "City Hall Website", "Service Portal", "Corruption Prevention", "General Law of the Protection of Data (LGPD)", "Confidential Document Data", "SMTI in numbers", "Data from the Municipal Education Networks", "Government Transition", "Institutional Agenda", "Service Charters", "Code of Ethics", among others. Next to the item "Satisfactory Survey 2025" there is an invitation for the population to evaluate public

services and contribute with suggestions, thus giving the population the opportunity to participate online in public management, or rather, in the new public management (Castro; Castro, 2014; Freitas, 2017).
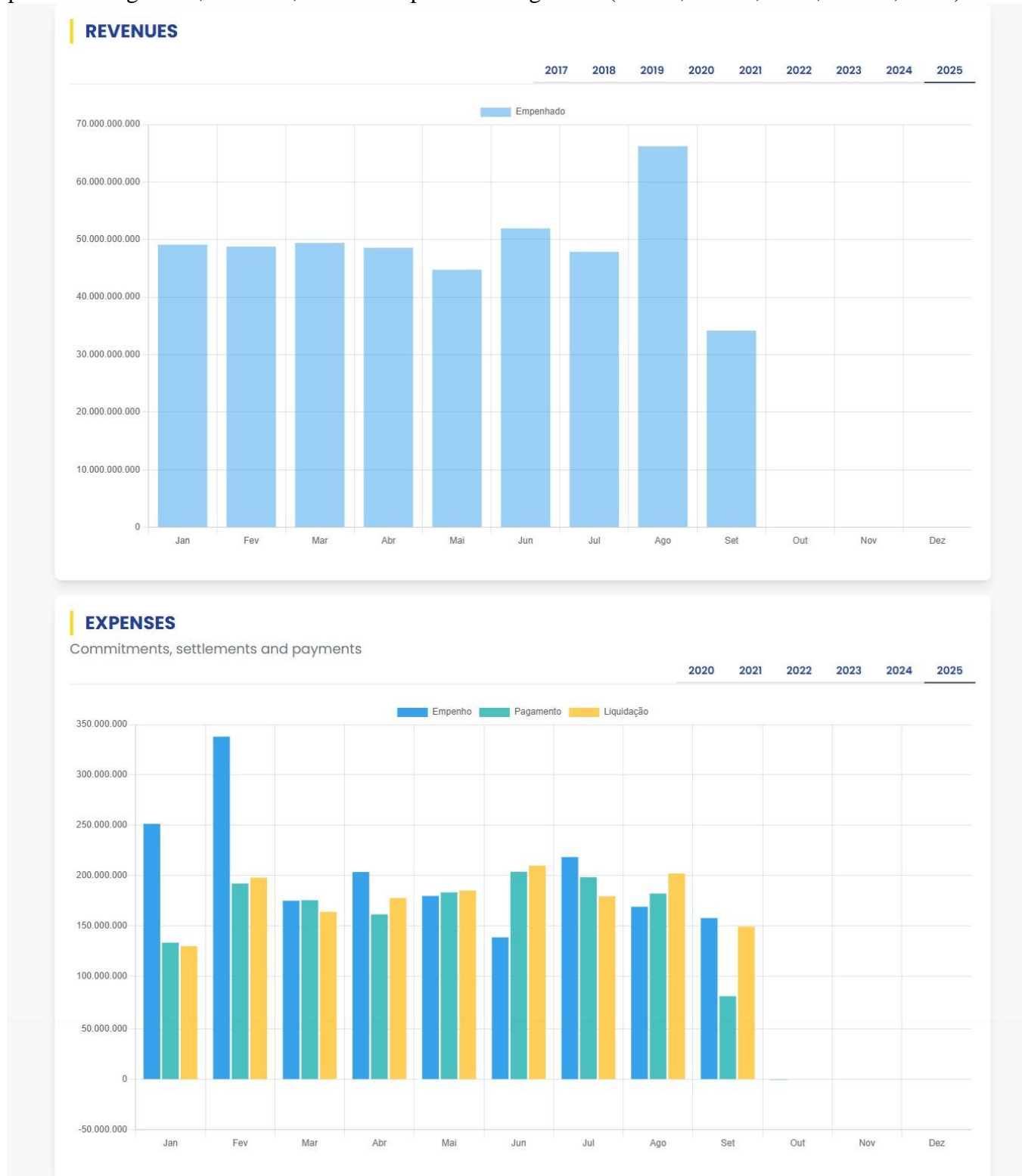

Figure 2. Graphs from the Transparency Portal of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho on November 1, 2025 (Bottom of the Portal)

Another highlight is the presence of Revenues and Expenses charts (Figure 2), which allow for visual and dynamic monitoring of budget execution, in addition to social oversight mechanisms. The portal is not limited to passively providing information; it promotes active transparency, structuring data in an accessible and navigable way, encouraging citizen participation and critical monitoring of public management. By exploring the menus, users better understand the platform's functionalities and are guided to an informative experience tailored to their needs.

This portal is managed by the Municipal Comptroller General's Office (CGM), through the Municipal Superintendence of Information Technology and Research (SMTI) of Porto Velho, Rondônia, but also in collaboration with other bodies that make up the Municipal Public Administration. It is a multidisciplinary effort where citizens can access information about projects and investments. However, the portal is undergoing an update process due to a change in management in late 2024 and early 2025.

Pierre Lévy anticipated, in the early 2000s, that the internet would transform the sharing of public information and promote transparency, but many Brazilians still depend exclusively on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, to stay informed. This limited perception of the internet, combined with the difficulty of distinguishing informative content from advertising and the lack of connection resources, exacerbates digital exclusion, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which deepened inequalities and hindered full access to essential services. Transparency, in this context, is seen as fundamental to the exercise of democratic rights, enabling social control, accountability for violations, and access to information as a basis for freedom of criticism, press, and expression. Therefore, in addition to guaranteeing technical access, it is urgent to invest in public policies for critical digital inclusion, expanding the understanding and responsible use of online information.

Social Participation in the New Public Management

According to Lévy (2011), the internet has transformed the public sphere by democratizing freedom of expression through decentralization, low-cost publishing, and accessibility to digital tools. This freedom also extends to the right to listen to and seek information, promoting greater informational autonomy for citizens, even in authoritarian regimes, through the use of technologies such as VPNs ("Virtual Private Networks"). The evolution of this digital medium is illustrated by historical milestones such as the use of social media in the Arab Spring, the impact of WikiLeaks, and Obama's 2008 campaign, demonstrating the strategic role of digital communication in global activism.

From these transformations, a new public management emerges, replacing the old bureaucratic logic with a more agile, transparent, and citizen-centered approach. In Brazil, programs such as Digital Government and platforms like Colab exemplify this transition, promoting more responsive and collaborative interactions between the State and society. Health apps used by various municipal administrations illustrate how public services can be optimized with technology, reducing queues, expanding access, and increasing efficiency. Modern management requires active listening, participatory planning, and a culture of transparency to strengthen social trust and cooperative ties.

The use of institutional social networks, such as the "Prefs" page of the Curitiba City Hall (Freitas, 2017), demonstrates how digital communication can promote citizen engagement and accountability. The adoption of accessible language, interactivity, and relevant themes has enabled closer ties between the government and the public, creating a culture of participation and strengthening digital citizenship. In addition, the page served as a bridge between social networks and the Transparency Portal, improving social oversight. This reinforces the educational role of networks in the process of political formation and citizen inclusion, pointing the way to a more ethical, innovative, and socially connected public administration.

The new public administration values efficiency, participation, and innovation, requiring an adaptable institutional structure committed to the common good. To this end, the importance of training public servants, adopting strategic planning tools, strengthening social oversight, and promoting integration between the public, private, and civil society sectors is highlighted. Results-oriented management, guided by evidence and performance indicators, replaces obsolete practices, enabling more rational decisions and more effective public policies. This transformation also requires cultural changes within institutions, which must be open to continuous learning and experimentation.

Castro & Castro (2014) and Cavalcante (2024) emphasize that this new public administration, based on democratic and collaborative values, is a response to the challenges posed by globalization, technological

advancement, and the growing demand for quality public services. The categories proposed for this management range from encouraging citizen participation and transparency to developing leadership and using data for strategic decisions. The continuous adaptation of institutions, focusing on listening, ethics, and innovation, is essential to consolidate open, efficient, and truly citizen-oriented governance.

Table 3. Categories with practices for new public management

CATEGORY	FEATURES
Contact with citizens	E-government, transparency (fiscal, political, administrative), access to services, community participation, participatory budgeting.
Human capital	Leadership development, skills and competencies development, performance recognition, meritocracy.
Governance and structuring	Outsourcing, privatization, decentralization, partnerships with public, private and third sectors, regulatory agencies, including management contracts.
Regulatory framework	Regulation, standardization and legislation.
Management practices	Strategic planning, portfolio management, programs and projects, use of performance indicators, knowledge management and budgetary financial management.

Source: Castro & Castro (2014)

DISCUSSION

Uma análise abrangente da ciberdemocracia como um desenvolvimento contemporâneo dos princípios democráticos aprimorados por meio de tecnologias digitais, fundamentada em noções históricas de democracia, desde as práticas atenienses até os modelos pós-Revolução Francesa, enfatiza que a democracia moderna deve ir além da votação periódica para abranger a participação contínua, a liberdade, a igualdade e a transparência. A incorporação das Tecnologias da Informação e Comunicação (TICs) na administração pública remodela a forma como os cidadãos se envolvem com a política, transformando a esfera pública em um ambiente mais participativo, dinâmico e descentralizado. Nesse contexto, a ciberdemocracia emerge tanto como uma estrutura teórica quanto como uma ferramenta prática para aprimorar o engajamento cívico e a responsabilização.

No entanto, a implementação da ciberdemocracia enfrenta desafios consideráveis. Embora as TICs possibilitem maior acesso à informação governamental e criem plataformas para o debate público, elas também reproduzem e até intensificam as desigualdades existentes. A exclusão digital, o controle algorítmico do conteúdo e as campanhas de desinformação podem dificultar a participação significativa, particularmente para as populações marginalizadas. Como o texto observa, sem inclusão digital e alfabetização midiática crítica, a promessa de informação democratizada pode lekvar à exclusão de grandes setores da sociedade dos processos de tomada de decisão. Isso é especialmente problemático em países como o Brasil, onde a infraestrutura e a educação digitais variam muito entre regiões e grupos socioeconômicos.

The case studies highlighted in the text, including the Transparency Portal of Porto Velho and the follower page of the "Prefs" fanpage in Curitiba (Freitas, 2017), illustrate both the potential and the limitations of digital public management. These initiatives show that transparency and participation can be enhanced through interactive digital platforms, but they also reveal a gap between technological capacity and real civic engagement. Although portals can offer open data and navigable interfaces, their real impact depends on citizen awareness, ease of use, and integration with platforms already frequented by the public, such as social media.

A fundamental insight from the discussion lies in the articulation of the new public management as an evolution of bureaucratic governance. This shift towards agility, responsiveness, and openness requires not only digital tools but also a change in institutional culture. The success of cyberdemocracy depends on collaborative governance models that empower civil society, train public servants in digital skills, and incorporate accountability as a core value. Furthermore, the use of social media by public institutions, when combined with transparency mechanisms, can reduce the distance between the State and its citizens, making governance more inclusive and participatory.

Ultimately, the text argues that cyberdemocracy is a constantly evolving process. It requires a convergence of access to information, ethical communication, public dialogue, and civic vigilance. This demands not only infrastructure and legislation, but also a cultural shift that redefines the relationship between citizens and the State. By adopting governance, promoting critical digital literacy, and institutionalizing transparency, governments can transform cyberdemocracy from a theoretical ideal into a practical reality, deepening democratic legitimacy in the digital age.

The Use of the Institutional Profiles of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho on Digital Social Medias as Tools to Enhance the Articulation and Organization of Citizens' Political Participation and Transparecy

The Facebook page of the   Municipal Government of PortoVelho (https://www.facebook.com/PrefeituraPVH), created on May 8, 2012, has approximately 68,000 followers as of November 1, 2025, representing 14.76% of the population of Porto Velho according to the last IBGE census in 2022 (460,434 inhabitants). The Instagram page of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho (https://www.instagram.com/prefeitura.pvh), created three years later, in February 2015, has approximately 114,000 followers as of November 1, 2025, representing 24.75% of the population.

This means that engagement is higher on Instagram. Both networks have used a more relaxed language through memes and trends, thus providing publications with greater impact and reaching a larger number of users. Below, in Figure 03, is the Facebook Fanpage of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho:

Figure 3. Facebook fan page of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho.

In Figure 3, we have a post with 10 likes and 1 comment. Generally, Facebook posts from the Porto Velho Municipal Government have this level of engagement due to low engagement among online citizens. However, on Instagram (Figure 4), we see high engagement in both likes and comments.
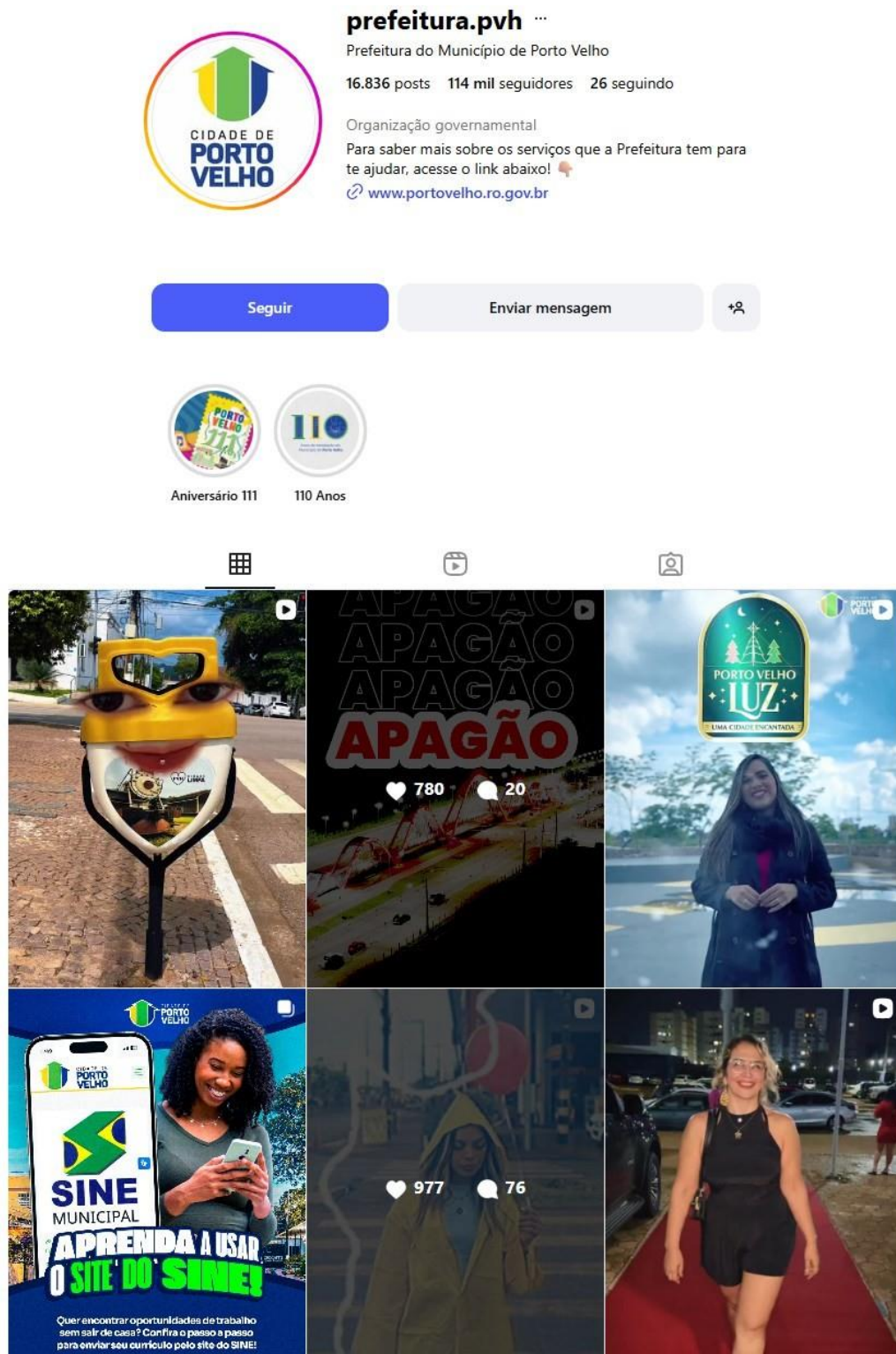

Figure 4. Institutional page of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho on Instagram.

Here we see that the page itself directs users to the official government website, and we also witness a high number of likes on posts and comments. This means that people have been seeking to stay more informed through digital social media than on the official city hall website itself (Figure 5). Despite the site's good organization, it is not possible to count the number of accesses because the page does not have such functionality.

Figure 5. Official website of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho.

These tools strengthen the ties between cybercitizens and the government, as they are tools that provide cyberdemocracy, especially on social media where participation is more active. It is clear that the government has sought media solutions for this, but it is important to highlight that access is still limited because not all citizens have access to the internet or the necessary technological resources.

CONCLUSION

The development of cyberdemocracy represents a transformative shift in how democratic principles are practiced and experienced in the digital age. By leveraging Information and Communication Technologies, particularly through platforms that promote transparency, participation, and accountability, cyberdemocracy has the potential to deepen citizen engagement and reshape public administration.

However, realizing this potential requires overcoming structural barriers such as digital exclusion, misinformation, and limited digital literacy. The case studies analyzed, including the Transparency Portal of Porto Velho and the "Prefs" Fanpage of the Curitiba Municipal Government, as well as the Porto Velho Municipal Government's Facebook and Instagram pages, demonstrate both the potential and the limitations of current initiatives. For cyberdemocracy to move beyond theoretical discourse and become an effective democratic tool, it must be grounded in inclusive digital policies, cultural changes within institutions, and genuine governance with civil society.

As a solution, it can be proposed that the institutional pages of the Municipal Government of Porto Velho on Facebook and Instagram implement usability policies for cybercitizens in order to better integrate the content published on these platforms with their interactivity, especially on Facebook where participation is low. In addition to implementing public spaces with access to computers with internet so that citizens can access their digital social media for free using public resources.

Only through continuous investments in computing infrastructure, transparency, ethical communication and collaborative practices can cyberdemocracy fulfill its role in strengthening democratic legitimacy and building a more just, informed and participatory society in the Municipality of Porto Velho.

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