

Performed Transparency: Media Visibility, Procedural Accountability, and Democratic Resilience in South Korea

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Abstract

In polarized democracies, governments increasingly make policy procedures visible through livestreamed briefings, staged ceremonies, auditions, and public selection formats. These formats can translate complex authority for citizens. Yet they can also make authority more visible than procedurally reconstructable: citizens may see questioning, authorization, or competition while the criteria, sequence, and responsibility structure behind public decisions become harder to recover. Existing work on populism, disinformation, political spectacle, and democratic accountability shows how media environments shape legitimacy, but less often asks whether visible governing scenes preserve the procedural conditions of accountability. This paper instead asks when public visibility strengthens democratic resilience, and when it converts procedural authority into performance-legible fragments.

The argument is not that spectacle is inherently anti-democratic; democracies need symbols, narratives, and shared scenes of orientation. The democratic risk begins when spectacle stops translating procedural authority and starts replacing procedural accountability with performance-legible authority. To analyse this pattern, the paper introduces Broadcast Governance as the media-facing organization of visibility, attention, and authority through which governments render procedures publicly legible.

Methodologically, the paper combines conceptual framework-building with an interpretive comparison of public-facing governmental formats, tracing how each format exposes or obscures criteria, sequence, responsibility, and evaluation. It examines South Korea as a concentrated case cluster where high-connectivity media environments, public distrust, and procedurally dense governing processes intersect. The cases include the staged 21st Presidential National Appointment Ceremony, livestreamed ministry briefings, the Everyone's Startup audition-style project, and the competitive Sovereign AI Foundation Model selection process.

The paper argues that visibility supports democratic resilience only when criteria, sequence, responsibility, and evaluation remain publicly reconstructable. When these elements detach from the visible scene, transparency becomes performed rather than accountable, weakening the procedural foundations of democratic resilience.

Note: This is an accepted conference abstract record, not a full paper.