

Mandat d'impulsion scientifique (MIS) - FNRS

Post-Truth Politics & Political Parties

Post-Truth Politics and Political Parties: to what extent and why do political parties use conspiracy discourse on social media?

Since the mid-2010s, concern over misinformation has been growing. Brexit and the 2016 US presidential election have highlighted the potential impact of manipulative messages on political decisions. These events are key milestones signalling the beginning of a new era, one of post-truth. It is characterized by a systemic shift towards a political culture in which accuracy and factual veracity in public debates are less important than other concerns and the line between facts and opinions is increasingly blurred. This presents contemporary democracies with a major challenge. Democracy is not only a set of formal rights, procedures, and institutions; it also requires enlightened understanding. But if facts are downgraded as mere opinions and political actors cannot agree on whether a fact is a fact, how can the democratic process unfold?

This project aims at understanding post-truth politics and its implications for democratic societies by looking at one central actor: political parties, which play a vital role as opinion shapers. Therefore, this project seeks to determine to what extent, and why political parties in Europe contribute to post-truth politics. It will focus on one facet of this phenomenon: conspiracy discourse.

It is structured around 3 steps: first, relying on a combination of inductive and deductive approach, it will examine how often parties use conspiracy discourse and the type of discourse. Then the second step seeks to understand why there is a variation among parties, with a hypothesis regarding the degree of populism and one on the relation between extremism and the use of conspiracy discourse. The last one focuses on the interactions between parties and citizens to understand the consequences for democracy. The project will compare 4 countries (Belgium, Denmark, Romania and Spain) and will use mixed method (Twitter data, quantitative analysis, citizens surveys and interviews with political elites).



Coordinatrice : Nathalie Brack

