



Transparency

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Transparency and Community

Transparency, in its original and literal sense, refers to a physical property of matter that allows light to pass through it, thereby revealing what lies inside or beyond a given material. In a figurative and conceptual sense, this property has long supported broader meanings associated with clarity, intelligibility and the absence of ambiguity. The growing social and political relevance of this notion – understood in opposition to opacity, misinterpretation and inaccessibility – helps explain its widespread adoption as a metaphor in political discourse, organisational practice and community life since the late twentieth century.

The term **community** derives from the Latin *communitas*, itself formed by *cum* (with, “together”) and *munus* (responsibility, “shared obligation”, “service”). This etymological root reveals the conceptual foundations of the term: a group of individuals bound by what they share and by the responsibilities that emerge from that shared condition, sustained by a sense of belonging and mutual interdependence. In this light, community should be understood not merely as an agglomeration of individuals, but as a moral and operational framework, within which relationships are shaped by shared values, collective purposes and reciprocal responsibilities. In contemporary contexts, one such essential value – and increasingly non-negotiable – is transparency.

Today, transparency has become a central pillar of the healthy functioning of any community. It is recognised as a foundational value of democratic societies, modern organisational systems and collective arrangements that aspire to foster trust, accountability and collective well-being. Within an environment marked by increasing social complexity, intensified information flows and heightened public expectations,

transparency can no longer be considered a decorative norm or an optional ethical gesture. Rather, it constitutes a substantive element of governance and community life, with demonstrable implications for decision-making quality, relational solidity and institutional legitimacy.

The notion of transparency evokes the possibility of perceiving phenomena clearly, without distortion or concealment. Within a community setting, this clarity becomes manifest in the ways information is disseminated, processes are explained, criteria are articulated, and responsibilities are acknowledged. Transparency does not simply entail the availability of data; it requires intentionality, ethical orientation and a commitment to communicational practices that are accessible, meaningful and comprehensible. It is this relational and human dimension – far exceeding any purely technical definition – that endows transparency with its transformative potential.

Transparency functions as a generator of trust, an enabler of accountability, a promoter of participation and a reinforcement of integrity.

Trust, as widely recognised in organisational and social theory, constitutes a critical resource for any community – whether territorial, academic, professional or institutional. Trust cannot be decreed; it must be cultivated, and transparency is its principal enabling condition. When individuals understand the rationale behind decisions, are aware of the criteria employed and can identify the responsibilities and limitations of each actor involved, trust is far more likely to emerge. Conversely, opacity tends to produce uncertainty, interpretative noise, fragmented perceptions and, at times, suspicion. A lack of transparency creates fertile ground for alternative narratives that weaken social bonds and hinder cooperation.

By contrast, a community that embraces transparent practices fosters an environment marked by proximity, respect and intellectual honesty. Individuals perceive themselves as competent and legitimate participants, capable of understanding and evaluating information relevant to their collective life. Shared information becomes a mechanism of inclusion rather than an instrument of authority. Under such conditions of trust, communities become more resilient, more prepared to face complexity and more inclined toward collaborative engagement.

Transparency also plays a decisive role in strengthening accountability. Accountability becomes feasible only when clarity exists regarding processes, norms, objectives and outcomes. Transparency opens the evaluative space required for such scrutiny and contributes to more just, equitable and effective systems. In public contexts, it allows citizens to examine policies, monitor expenditure and understand the implications of decisions. In organisational settings, it reduces arbitrariness, clarifies performance expectations and supports fairer internal processes. In educational communities, transparency upholds both academic and institutional integrity, thereby fostering trust among students, faculty and leadership. Importantly, accountability should not be equated with punishment; rather, it concerns the visibility, comprehensibility and contestability of actions. By rendering actions visible, transparency nurtures a culture of shared responsibility and strengthens collective commitment to the common good.

In similar fashion, transparency is essential to meaningful participation. Participation is frequently taken as an indicator of democratic and organisational vitality, yet no participation can be substantive without adequate information. Individuals require timely, accurate and relevant data to engage through critique, suggestion, deliberation or vote. Transparency thus democratises access to knowledge, transforming community members into co-producers of solutions and enhancing the legitimacy of collective decisions. When decision-making processes are transparent, they cease to be perceived as external impositions and are instead understood as outcomes of shared deliberation – even when consensus is not achieved. Furthermore, transparency broadens the discursive space, encourages critical reflection and allows diverse perspectives to emerge, thereby improving the quality and robustness of outcomes. Participation cannot be manufactured by decree; it must be cultivated, and transparency forms its principal condition.

Transparency does not replace integrity, but it renders integrity publicly perceptible. Communities that adopt transparent practices reduce spaces susceptible to conflicts of interest, diminish the likelihood of arbitrary decisions and strengthen ethical consistency. Communities are not abstract constructions; they are composed of individuals acting on the basis of values, perceptions and experiences. Transparency is therefore not merely a procedural requirement: it is a cultural attribute whose presence or absence profoundly shapes relational dynamics and

institutional life. A culture grounded in transparency supports continuous learning, collaboration, diversity inclusion – by reducing informational asymmetries – as well as innovation and ethical coherence. Opacity, by contrast, tends to generate defensive, risk-averse and less collaborative environments. Institutional secrecy seldom protects; more often, it weakens.

Finally, the significance of transparency for community life lies in its contribution to the common good. A transparent community is more informed, more cohesive and more participatory. It is also better equipped to prevent conflicts, anticipate challenges and adapt to change. Transparency emerges, therefore, as an expression of ethical responsibility: it reflects a commitment to truth, respect for individuals and confidence in the community's own capacities. In a context characterised by increasing complexity, accelerated information flows and heightened societal expectations, transparency must be understood not simply as a value but **as an ethical infrastructure sustaining the quality of relationships, organisational functions and collective life.**