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The manipulation of public policy evidence with Generative Artificial Intelligence: the risks of deepfakes

La manipulación de la evidencia de políticas públicas con la Inteligencia Artificial Generativa: los riesgos de los deepfakes

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Abstract

The article analyzes the risks of using Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) and deepfakes in the formulation of public policies. The justification lies in the growing presence of digital media that allows citizens to generate evidence of public issues, and the risk of manipulating this evidence through technologies like GAI, which could distort governmental decision-making. The objective is to highlight how Deepfakes can alter the public perception of social issues, distorting the political agenda and the government's response. The research is qualitative, with an exploratory and descriptive approach, utilizing documentary review on public policies, GAI, and deepfakes. The lack of specific legislation on GAI in countries like Mexico increases these risks, and it is suggested that both governments and civil society work on regulation by promoting greater transparency in digital information to ensure that public policies are based on real evidence. The conclusions highlight that deepfakes create significant distortion in the evidence of public issues, which can lead to erroneous decisions. The creation of regulatory frameworks and the use of content verification technologies are recommended to mitigate these risks. The relationship between public policies and GAI is noted as a novel field of study for generating new knowledge.

Keywords

Public policies, agenda setting, evidence, internet, social media, Artificial Intelligence, fake news, misinformation.

Resumen
El artículo analiza los riesgos del uso de la Inteligencia Artificial Generativa (IAG) y los *deepfakes* en la formulación de políticas públicas. La justificación radica en la creciente presencia de medios digitales que permiten a los ciudadanos generar evidencia de problemas públicos, y el riesgo de manipulación de esta evidencia mediante tecnologías como la IAG, lo que podría distorsionar la toma de decisiones gubernamentales. El objetivo es señalar cómo los *deepfakes* pueden alterar la percepción pública de problemas sociales, distorsionando la agenda política y la respuesta gubernamental. La investigación es de tipo cualitativo, con enfoque exploratorio y descriptivo, utilizando revisión documental sobre políticas públicas, IAG y *deepfakes*. Se subraya que, en países como México, la falta de legislación específica sobre la IAG amplifica estos riesgos, y se sugiere que tanto gobiernos como sociedad civil trabajen en la regulación y en la promoción de una mayor transparencia en la información digital, para asegurar que las políticas públicas se basen en evidencia real. Las conclusiones destacan que los *deepfakes* generan una distorsión significativa en la evidencia de los problemas públicos, lo que puede llevar a decisiones erróneas. Se recomienda la creación de marcos regulatorios y el uso de tecnologías de verificación de contenido para mitigar estos riesgos. Se señala la relación entre políticas públicas e IAG como un campo de estudio novedoso para la generación de nuevo conocimiento.

Palabras clave
Políticas públicas, agenda, evidencia, internet, redes sociales, Inteligencia Artificial, noticias falsas, desinformación.

Introduction

Citizens in the digital age can generate and disseminate evidence of public problems using technologies such as smartphones, social media, and artificial intelligence (AI), facilitating greater citizen participation in matters of collective interest, such as public policy. These involve both the government and non-governmental actors and citizens, from agenda setting to the evaluation of the results. On the Internet and social media, it is common to find evidence shared by citizens about public problems such as potholes, flooding, broken streetlights, insecurity, or natural disasters. This access has allowed more citizen participation in detecting situations not addressed by the authorities, generating useful evidence for public policy. However, there are also risks related to the manipulation of such evidence, which can distort how problems are addressed.

Access to technology has also enabled the creation of manipulated content through Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI), which can generate false visual, auditory, or textual content with a high degree of realism, known as deepfakes. These materials, such as videos of false situations or audio recordings of manipulated political speeches present a challenge for public policy formulation, as they can distort the reality of public problems.

The manipulation of public policy evidence through deepfakes poses risks to the government decision-making process, distorting the political agenda, affecting the government's response, and reducing public confidence. Although citizen participation is essential, there are group interests that can divert policies toward interests, reinforcing the risk of misinformation. This article aims to point out that there are risks of manipulation of public policy evidence presented by digital media through deepfakes made with GAI. When false or incorrect information and evidence about a problem is received, the result of public policy will not be the solution to the situation. The premise is that thanks to digital media such as smartphones, their applications (apps), and social networks (Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok), any citizen can generate evidence, whether as a photo, video, or audio, and disseminate it with the aim of having it included in the government's agenda. However, there is a risk that these materials could be manipulated using generative artificial intelligence (GAI), which allows for the creation and distribution of manipulated, decontextualized, or false content, thus distorting information and negatively affecting the public policy-making process. Mexico is taken as a reference, as it currently lacks laws, strategies, and policies to regulate GAI and deepfakes.

Materials and method

This study was developed using a qualitative approach with the aim of understanding and analyzing emerging phenomena, such as the manipulation of evidence in public policy through deepfakes generated by GAI, which is a novel topic, as the relationship between this technology and public policy has been little addressed. Consequently, the scope of this work is mainly exploratory and descriptive, allowing for a deeper understanding of how technologies such as deepfakes can influence government decision-making and policy formulation. This approach is appropriate given the exploratory natu-

re of the phenomenon, which is poorly documented in the current literature (Quecedo and Castaño, 2002), especially in relation to the manipulation of digital evidence and its implications in the public policy.

Research design

To study the phenomena addressed in this article, a documentary investigation was carried out that involved reviewing "scientific articles, book chapters, books, scientific topics on social media, newspapers, interviews with individuals, and any other source of information in which a scientific methodology was written and implemented to analyze, evaluate, and create new information" (González-López, 2024, p. 7). The literature analysis was selective, as only the most important and relevant texts on the topics under study were selected (Hernández *et al.*, 2014). According to these authors, selective review occurs when one is familiar with a research topic, as in this case, which was related to public policy. The bibliography was searched for topics related to its conceptualization, public problems, agenda setting, and public policy evidence. Given the novelty of the topic of GAI, a more exhaustive search had to be conducted, which was done mainly online, involving "browsing and searching scientific databases, institutional repositories, and academic networks. Its purpose is to generate primary or original data, i.e., new knowledge based on the analysis of secondary data present in documents (scientific articles, books, papers, theses, etc.) published on the web" (Arias-Odon, 2023, p. 15). In this regard, related theses were searched in the UNAM catalog and in Google Scholar, "a free bibliographic search engine specialized in retrieving scientific documents in a large number of disciplines and sources, such as peer-reviewed scientific articles, theses or dissertations, patents, books, abstracts, technical reports, etc. It also identifies the citations these have received, helping to understand the impact of publications, thus becoming a competitor to other search engines and citation indexes" (Franco, 2023, p. 37). Terms such as deepfakes, fake news, misinformation, infodemic, and social media were entered into the search engine. To narrow down the topics, the operators "And" and "Or" were used, for example "deepfake" and "public policy," in order to obtain more accurate results. Additionally, Internet and social networks were searched for cases of deepfakes related to a public issue, and news sites and profiles from networks such as Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok were used.

Theoretical framework

This section explores the connections between concepts that although initially seemingly unrelated, are interrelated in the current context: public policy, policy agenda, public policy evidence, and AI-generated deepfakes. Manipulating this evidence with AI could distort government decisions and affect expected outcomes.

Public policy

The definition of public policy has been widely debated by academics. Since the beginning of this form of government based on decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of government action, academics interested in the subject have developed a wide range of topics for understanding so-called policies. In the specialized literature, there are broad or very specific definitions, so as not to call them limited or deficient. In this regard, Velásquez (2009) points out that the definition of public policies is such a complex process that some authors do not explicitly provide a definition in their research; others simply cite a conceptualization proposed by another author; and in other cases, they limit themselves to listing the elements that make up public policy, concluding with their own proposal. The present work can be framed in this case, as its purpose is not to participate in the debate on the definition of public policies, but it does consider it important to understand what a public policy is, which may be debated or contrasted in the future. However, rather than being considered a problem or a flaw, this is, within the framework of the academic debate typical of the social sciences, an opportunity to enrich the discussion, in the hope that readers and those interested in the topics addressed will discover and integrate elements that strengthen the field of knowledge. Returning to the point of the essential elements for understanding public policy, the following are proposed:

- The existence of a public problem: these types of problems are those that negatively affect or impact a community, and according to Aguilar (2017), they are interesting such as those related to the safety of people and their property, and fall within the scope of the constitutional responsibilities of the state, requiring only that the government's obligations be adequately fulfilled. Furthermore, these problems have

been called complex or twisted (Head, 2008), and the following characteristics are recognized, according to Rittel and Webber (2017): They do not have a definitive solution; solutions are temporary and may change over time or as the problem evolves. Likewise, possible solutions can generate new problems, which cannot all be foreseen, thus creating uncertainty in the decision-making process.

- The (in)action of the authorities: the state plays a crucial role in managing these problems. Uvalle (2022) emphasizes that state bodies are responsible for recognizing these problems and responding to them actively. However, inaction is also considered a form of public policy, not because of omission or incompetence, but when those responsible do not allocate resources or propose actions, often for ideological reasons or lack of resources (McConnel and 't Hart, 2019).
- Participation of other sectors: although public policy consists of actions taken by the authorities, this does not mean an arbitrary exercise of power. In other words, "public policies are not the product of the ideals or desires of those in power, nor of dictatorial or autocratic political regimes" (Uvalle, 2022, p. 25), as one element that has characterized government through public policy is the participation of non-governmental actors who are involved, affected, or interested in the public problem, the intervention, and the solution. This involves seeking dialogue, understanding, and agreements that give legitimacy to the action taken by the government, which, according to Franco (2020), includes listening to the opinions of those affected and giving them a participatory role in the policy process, which gives legitimacy to public action and strengthens the democratic environment (Arellano and Blanco, 2013).
- Decisions, tools, and information: there are several public problems, but governments, due to limitations in resources, capacity, or ideology, select some to form their government agenda, prioritizing those that they can address and that will shape the government agenda, which lists "the set of problems, demands, issues, and matters that those in power have selected and ordered as objects of their action and on which they have decided that they must and have to act" (Aguilar, 2017, p. 29). Governments must choose the appropriate instruments to channel their action, with the aim of modifying what is causing unrest in society (Villarreal, 2019). Regarding information, Bardach

> (1998) points out that the analysis of public policy design must be based on information that becomes evidence for understanding and quantifying a public problem (which may have different rhetorics and interpretations), and thus resolving it or at least controlling it. The decision-making process, the use of resources, the actions implemented, and the improvement of the planning process depend on this information (Paz, 2024).

After grouping the key elements of public policies and aligning them with the themes and objectives, these can be understood as interventions (decision, action, evaluation, continuity, and termination) by the competent authorities, aimed at identifying and solving public problems, in coordination with relevant actors, using knowledge, tools, and appropriate evidence to achieve better results. This work does not focus on the debate on the conceptual construction of public policies, but rather analyzes the relationship between emerging technologies, such as ICT and artificial intelligence, and their impact on public policy formulation. Digital platforms have transformed citizen participation, allowing citizens to exert a more direct and massive influence. Social networks, online forums, and electronic surveys broaden the diversity of actors involved, leaving behind elitist political processes limited to experts and politicians.

Evidence in public policy

Evidence is crucial in the public policy process, as it provides information about the problem, its magnitude, those affected, resources, and decision alternatives. Public problems are complex, and each actor involved will defend their vision, generating a debate full of beliefs, interests, and values (Pirazán and Ríos, 2014). This complicates analysis and decision-making, as politics does not always follow a rational and technical process, but is influenced by political conflicts, value judgments, and ideologies (Jaime *et al.,* 2013).

Evidence is a "clear certainty that cannot be doubted" (Real Academia Española, 2025). It is any type of information, data, or fact that supports a statement, theory, or argument and is used to prove or refute an idea or hypothesis. In this sense, evidence serves to strengthen an argument, providing objectivity and reducing or eliminating uncertainties and ambiguities. In the context of public policy, evidence plays a crucial role, as it provides the ne-

cessary support for informed design and decision-making. Thus, the so-called Evidence-Based Public Policy approach emerged, specifically when in...

> 1999, the British government proposed introducing an "enlightened" vision for developing public policy. Then Prime Minister Tony Blair suggested that good policy-making depended on high-quality information, which is obtained from various sources such as expert knowledge, existing national and international research, statistical data, consultation with stakeholders, previous policy evaluation exercises, recent research, and even secondary sources. (Flores-Crespo, 2013, p. 267)

According to Head (2008), three types of evidence have been identified in public policy:

- Political knowledge: generated by political actors, parties, interest groups, and the media. It is subjective, influenced by ideologies and interests.
- Scientific knowledge: based on analytical methods and empirical evidence. It is essential that the data be reliable and the methods systematic to ensure objective conclusions.
- Practical knowledge: comes from everyday experience in the implementation of policies and programs, without being derived from theories or systematic analysis.

An additional category called citizen evidence can be integrated, which is not always constructed scientifically, it may have political influences and subjectivities and may possess practical wisdom as parties affected by public policy, and may represent "the knowledge of citizens, both individually and collectively, from their everyday experiences. This evidence is linked to understanding a place, a culture, or a community and its problems, and is acquired through the direct experience of the people who are part of it" (Ademokun *et al.,* 2016, p. 28). This evidence is loaded with subjectivity; it needs to be balanced with the scientific knowledge and experience of the implementer.

Ultimately, it is citizens who directly experience public problems such as insecurity, poor infrastructure, traffic, garbage, inadequate transportation, and flooding. In a democratic environment, their voice is fundamental in the creation of public policies. Those involved present their versions and seek benefits, which generates public discussion between citizens and policy makers,

allowing for results and conclusions based on diverse points of view about the reality (Majone, 1997).

It is essential to consider the stage of the public policy at which evidence is incorporated, and what type of evidence. On this point, Pollard and Court (2005) highlight the role of evidence at each stage of public policy

- Agenda setting: it is essential to identify the problem, the argument, and the evidence.
- Formulation: analysis of options, decisions, and actions.
- Implementation: putting the policy into action.
- Evaluation: monitoring the results obtained, determining whether the policy is on the right track or it needs changes.

This work focuses on the evidence for the agenda-setting stage and how it contributes to determining which problems will be addressed, given that not all of them can be addressed by the authorities due to financial, technical, human, or ideological constraints. The way in which the agenda is set directly influences public policy; thus, citizen evidence is key in this process. According to the OCDE (2024), citizens are considered "experts by experience" and "stakeholders" in policy-making, which ensures equity and inclusive access. Citizen evidence provides crucial empirical information for decision-making. This evidence is obtained through surveys, participatory forums, public consultations, and social media, which allow citizens to report problems such as potholes, crime, abuse of authority, and deficiencies in public services, facilitating organization and mobilization to address these issues. In this regard, Cruz-Rubio (2015) identifies some tools for citizens to participate in the public policy formulation stage:

- Citizen forums where the problem can be presented, argued, and evidence presented.
- Citizen committees for decision-making.
- Focus groups, in which information and evidence about a problem are presented.
- Surveys and polls to obtain information and data, which become evidence.
- Digital media. In this case, the list of tools is more extensive, thanks to the rise of ICT and mass accessibility. These channels, such as civic apps and social networks, allow citizens to inform authorities about

public problems and participate in debates. Civic apps facilitate the reporting of relevant events, while social media encourages communication, participation, and access to information (Cruz-Rubio, 2015).

Generative Artificial Intelligence and deepfakes

The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into key areas of society, such as commerce, health, education, administration, and public policy, has recently gained relevance. AI is defined as a disruptive technology that:

> Uses data and algorithms to perform typically human tasks; is capable of learning autonomously and making decisions based on the use of data and algorithms; is capable of generating capabilities and learning considered autonomous and/or intelligent, as well as performing tasks commonly understood as human, focused on the achievement of certain objectives, including different areas of application, among others, perception, reasoning, or action. (CLAD, 2023, p. 7)

AI applications such as predictive analytics, big data analysis, the possibility of implementing conversational agents (chatbots), decision-making, and encouraging citizen participation have been noted. Like all technology, AI is at risks to "have potential threats that can also negatively affect individuals in different areas of development, i.e., it generates effects both internal and external to the system" (Vera, 2024, p. 91).

The Ibero-American Charter on Artificial Intelligence in Public Administration (CLAD, 2023) identifies risks in the protection of personal data, privacy, transparency of algorithms, human bias, and manipulation of systems.

In particular, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI), which creates content such as text, images, and videos, is gaining attention. Unlike traditional AI, which focuses on data analysis, GAI produces products such as photographs, videos, and conversations (OCDE, 2023). This type of AI does not focus on prediction, classification, or analysis of data volumes (AMETIC, 2024), but rather its final product can be a photograph, a video, an animation, a song, a conversation, or a statement. According to Storey et al. (2025), "GIA has generated great interest and speculation about the role of artificial intelligence in everyday use, driven in part by the growing popularity of tools such as ChatGPT and Dall-E, MidJourney, Google Bard, and CoPilot AI" (p. 3). A recent phenomenon related to generative artificial intelligence (GAI) is that

of *deepfakes:* false or manipulated content created with the aim of spreading misinformation or misleading information. These can generate realistic but false images and videos that are used to defame, influence electoral processes, or damage the reputation of individuals and institutions (Ríos, 2023).

This phenomenon began in 2017, when a Reddit user shared manipulated videos of celebrities with explicit sexual content (Caballero, 2024). Deepfake is understood as:

> The use of deep learning techniques to create misleading media content. This term encompasses both the creation process and the resulting manipulated media. This technology allows the content of media to be altered without direct interaction with the original material. (Ramos-Zaga, 2024, p. 365)

The term "deepfake" comes from the English words "deep" and "fake." It refers to the manipulation of visual, audio, or multimedia content using deep neural networks, a type of artificial intelligence algorithm to create fake material that appears genuine.

Generative Artificial Intelligence and Public Policy Evidence

As mentioned, this paper establishes a relationship between two separate topics that have been found to have a connecting element: GAI and deepfakes used to manipulate evidence of public policy. The manipulation of social reality is by no means a recent phenomenon. Even in what could be called the offline era, i.e., before the emergence of digital media, there were practices in place to control the media in order to broadcast "misleading news and unreliable or manipulated information, such as statements or declarations taken out of context that explain the motivation of those who issue them" (Chávez, 2022, p. 44). Before ICTs, traditional media such as television, radio, and print media controlled the dissemination of information on social and political issues. In that pre-digital era, media manipulation through images, videos, and texts already existed to influence public perception (Cabral, 2019). Mayoral *et al.* (2019) point out that disinformation and lies for specific purposes have been present throughout history and that rumors have always been part of civilizations.

Subsequently, the fourth industrial revolution or digital age began, marked by the intensive use of ICT in virtually all aspects of society. As Schwab (2017) mentions, we are living in the era of digital technologies, the Internet, social networks, smartphones, and artificial intelligence (including AGI). With these technologies, the monopoly on information held by traditional media such as television, radio, and print media began to collapse, and "journalists no longer have a monopoly on mediating between an event and its reporting. Journalists and their companies are no longer the only ones with the tools to construct and disseminate news" (Espiritusanto, 2011, p. 8). With technologies accessible to all, it is now easy to generate and disseminate content with various intentions, including to cause social harm. In the digital age, the manipulation of information is facilitated, allowing citizens to become prosumers, creating and sharing content to discuss and analyze public issues (Lastra, 2016).

Digital media has facilitated citizen participation in reporting public issues, allowing information to be shared immediately and globally. However, the democratization of information also carries the risk of manipulation, a phenomenon that, although amplified by technology, is not new. For example, it is possible to upload videos, photographs, or any other material that is false, manipulated, or taken out of context to "construct plausible narratives of false events" (Bañuelos, 2020, p. 54).

Initially, *deepfakes* focused on celebrities, politicians, and economic leaders (Westerlund, 2019), However, their use has escalated to even criminal acts such as extortion, dissemination of personal data, invasion of privacy, fraud, copyright infringement, and distortion of democratic processes (Ramos-Zaga, 2024), to which can be added the manipulation of evidence for designing public policies. In this regard, Arguelles (2023) points out that GAI can be misused, leading to a misguided analysis of the problem and subsequent policy phases. Public problems can also be underestimated or overestimated, generating a distorted government agenda and, as a result, the persistence or aggravation of the real problem. On the Internet and social media, it is common to find multimedia materials that supposedly highlight a public problem, such as videos of people falling into potholes filled with water during a live television broadcast; or interviews with alleged victims of a natural disaster; or videos of people swimming or boating after heavy rain. In this way, *deepfakes* can distort reality, information, and evidence in public policy, which is addressed in the following section.

The relationship between AI and GAI in public policy evidence

Continuing with the argument of the potential of digital media to share information, data, and evidence on public issues, the evolution of the web towards stages 2.0 and 3.0 has made digital media more interactive, allowing citizens to produce and share multimedia content (photos, audio, video) as evidence of public issues, which facilitates the incorporation of these topics into the public policy agenda. According to Bekkers and Edwards (2018), these digital media play a prominent role in disseminating images, sounds, and other visual experiences to help frame issues and, as Rodríguez (2021) mentions, document what is being experienced and leave evidence.

For Pearson and Dare (2016), audiovisual content used as evidence for public policy design promotes a broader understanding of the social world and becomes an important element in policy formulation. By focusing on images and visual materials rather than written words and numbers, they facilitate the participation of members of society who are often marginalized from traditional policy analysis processes and can provide a more complete picture of the issues or context. Digital media have been effective "in positioning social issues on the media agenda and later influencing the political sphere. Their importance is noteworthy because of their capacity for outreaching and accessing the information which facilitates social organization" (Mendoza, 2021, p. 53).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been integrated into the public policy process, improving policy design from the identification of the problem to the implementation of the evaluation, measuring effectiveness, costs, and results (González *et al.*, 2020). In particular, it plays a key role in the agenda setting and identification of the problem, improving the accuracy, efficiency, and speed of data analysis. Digital media, such as social networks and platforms, have become crucial sources of information that AI can process to generate relevant evidence (Valle-Cruz *et al.*, 2020).

Although the potential of AI to transform public administration and policy is recognized, governments with limited technological infrastructure may be left out of its benefits. The digital divide is a key barrier, as it creates inequalities in access to essential tools such as the Internet, mobile devices, and social media. This makes it difficult for certain governments and communities to take advantage of these technologies to make informed decisions. For

example, many administrations lack websites, mobile applications, or a presence on social media. In addition, the lack of access to devices and connectivity limits citizens' ability to collect and share evidence on public issues, making it difficult to distinguish between truthful and manipulated information.

Information manipulation in Mexico: from historical cases and the information monopoly to the risks of deepfakes

In Mexico, ICTs have democratized access to public information, a significant advance compared to the pre-digital era of the 20th century. At that time, media such as radio, television, and the press were essential in shaping public opinion, but they were also manipulated to align information with political and economic interests. In most of the 20th century, Mexico lived under an authoritarian political system that controlled the media, using technologies such as television and radio to disseminate official discourse and manipulate information. This control favored political and economic interests and omitted the context necessary for a broader understanding of reality. The media portrayed an image of growth and progress, while minimizing or ignoring social inequalities, human rights violations, and political repression, due to the complicity between the government and the media (Gutiérrez, 1985). In this era of hegemonic party rule, the media...

> Far from being interlocutors or counterweights to power as they are in democratic societies, in Mexico the media were true accomplices of the government. In Mexico, the close collaboration of the media with the authoritarian regime occurred because the media owners were, to a greater or lesser extent, part of the power system. (Bravo, 2008, p. 63)

In Mexico, it is difficult to obtain information on cases of manipulation of information on everyday public issues in the non-digital era. However, there are representative cases of information manipulation, such as the events of October 2, 1968, when television networks did not cover the events in Tlatelolco objectively and presented the demonstrators as a threat to the stability of the country. The narrative broadcast on television favored the government and concealed the magnitude of the repression (Fijałkowska, 2013). The 1988 elections and election campaigns (Sandoval, 2002), and even the case of the "chupacabra," a rumor spread by the mass media in the 1990s

about the existence of a creature that attacked animals (livestock) and even humans, fueled by testimonies from alleged witnesses and which was on the agenda for several months (Zires and Ledesma, 2007).

In the 21st century, the advent of digital media, Web 2.0, smartphones, and social networks broke the monopolies of traditional media. An example of this was the #internetnecesario movement in 2011, which prevented Internet services from being taxed (Zamora, 2011). Similarly, in situations such as natural disasters, a problem that afflects Mexico, ICTs have been a great ally for civic mobilization, as in the 2017 earthquakes when "mobile devices and their cameras and data connections, citizens were able to generate their own videos, something that in 1985 seemed exclusive to television stations, with tools such as Periscope and Facebook Live, live *streaming* was possible via Twitter and Facebook" (Cruz-Meléndez, 2022, p. 120). Digital media are also useful for highlighting everyday public problems, such as poor road conditions, broken street lighting, traffic problems, poor health and education services, corruption among public servants, and public insecurity.

However, the impact that GAI and *deepfakes* may have on public policy evidence is a topic that has been little addressed in Mexico, where there is no regulation or strategy regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence, although there have been some attempts worth mentioning. From civil society, there is the National Artificial Intelligence Alliance (ANIA), "a coalition of experts in Artificial Intelligence from all sectors and disciplines who seek to democratize access of AI in Mexico and promote inclusion, adoption, transformation, social welfare, and economic development, and which recognizes and strengthens the artificial intelligence ecosystem in Mexico with a comprehensive, pluralistic, and multidisciplinary perspective" (ANIA, 2025). This organization presented a document called "Proposal for a National Artificial Intelligence Agenda for Mexico 2024-2030" in which recommendations are made on AI public policies on issues such as security, data protection, innovation, education, and human rights. Although it does not directly mention deepfakes, it does mention the importance of "developing systems to detect fake or misleading news, disinformation, distortion of reality, and other synthetic content that can be used to manipulate public opinion" (Lagunes *et al.,* 2023, p. 24). In terms of AI legislation, there is no law regulating its use; only initiatives have been presented, most of which focus on deepfakes (Meza, 2024), which means that the issue addressed here has been interesting to the legislature. For example, the "Initiative with a draft decree issuing the Federal Law Regulating Artifi-

cial Intelligence" presented in the Senate of the Republic mentions penalties for those who use deepfakes to manipulate situations, people, or places. For its part, the judiciary has also taken action on AI deepfakes, but only in cases where they are used for sexually explicit content (SCJN, 2025), so it has not yet discussed the issue of manipulation of public policy evidence.

Conclusions

Widespread access to ICT and GAI presents both opportunities and risks for public policy. From a positive perspective, it allows citizens to actively participate in issues that were previously reserved for bureaucrats and politicians, giving them the ability to generate evidence through available digital media. However, there are also associated risks, as technologies such as GAI, which gives rise to deepfakes, can be used to manipulate situations and distort the perception of social problems, affecting the formulation of public policy. In countries such as Mexico, where regulation of AI is scarce and there is no strategy to control deepfakes, the risks are increased. On the one hand, digital media have broken the monopoly of information, allowing citizens to generate direct evidence on public issues; but, on the other hand, there have been cases in which deepfakes have not only affected individuals, but also altered the perception of social situations. This environment of misinformation poses a significant challenge, as it can distort the evidence used in government decision-making. Therefore, it is crucial that governments, civil society, and citizens implement easily accessible measures for verifying and authenticating digital content to ensure that public policies are based on real evidence and are carried out in a scientific, transparent, and professional way.

Given that Mexico does not yet have specific legislation on AI and seeks to preserve citizen participation in public policy-making, it is essential to create a legal and institutional framework that regulates the use of AI-generated materials and controls deepfakes. This includes not only protection against harm to individuals, such as privacy violations, defamation, or identity theft, but also the preservation of the integrity of the evidence used in public policy. This framework already has foundations in organizations such as the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA), created in 2021 by Microsoft, Adobe, Google, Sony, Meta, and others, which are dedicated to verifying the authenticity of digital content. In addition, technologies such

as *blockchain* offer solutions for identifying, verifying, and removing deepfakes and other manipulated content.

It is essential that the legislative branch prioritize this issue and pass an Artificial Intelligence law that addresses ethical, moral, and protection aspects of rights violated by GAI. In this context, the academic sector has an opportunity to research new approaches to public policy and its relationship with GAI and deepfakes. This is a novel and interdisciplinary field of study that involves areas as diverse as technology, ethics, politics, communication, administration, public policy, and law, making it a complex topic to address. Although this work focused on the relationship between evidence, GAI, and deepfakes, there are also ample opportunities for research in other phases of the public policy cycle, such as the creation of legal frameworks and ethical dilemmas in the regulation of AI-generated content.

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Declaration of Authorship - CRediT Taxonomy	
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Christian Cruz-Meléndez	Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal Analysis, Research, Resources, Data Curation, Original Draft Writing, Writing Review and Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project Management, and Fund Acquisition.

Declaration of Use of Artificial Intelligence
The author DECLARES that the article ***Manipulation of Public Policy Evidence with Generative Artificial Intelligence: The Risks of*** **Deepfakes** was not created with the support of Artificial Intelligence (AI).