

DISINFORMATION UNCONFERENCE

– *digest* –





- The team of the French Ambassador for Digital Affairs hosted an **unconference** at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on June 27th and 28th, 2019.
- It gathered **50 practitioners from various backgrounds**, including social researchers, engineers, NGOs, officials, diplomats, public actors and social media platforms.
- It also hosted the first non-US workshop of the Social Science One research program with data opened by Facebook.
- All participants interacted, shared and learned from one another through collaborative, open formats.



DAY 1: OPEN FORUM



Participants interacted following an [Open Space Technology](#) approach. This **collaborative** framework, free from formal interventions or speeches, allows (and expects) everyone to **participate** in peer to peer exchanges, with the support of a professional **facilitator**.

Some **topics** were suggested beforehand, but ultimately they were chosen by the participants. Indeed, two “**marketplace**” moments began the morning and the afternoon. During those, each guest could offer a topic for discussion.

Several **workshops** were set up throughout the room, each tackling a subject and hosting 5-10 people. Everyone was free to **move** around the room and **pick** the workshops they were most interested in. Participants are encouraged to leave a workshop for another if one is neither contributing nor learning.

DAY 2: HACKATHON

On the second day of the unconference, guests took part in a [hackathon](#). After a short presentation of the available data, all participants could pitch an idea and assemble freely into teams that would work on them.

Gathering digital makers and social science researchers among other actors, it allowed participants to suggest research hypotheses and design ways to test them throughout the day, as well as to prototype tools that could curb information manipulation.

In a side room, Social Science One academic and Facebook teams delivered trainings on their datasets, research topics and technical tools.



DAY 1: OPEN FORUM

During the **marketplace**, participants shared the topics they wanted to collaborate on.

Workshops of 5–10 people were then organized on these topics, which filled 5 **sessions** throughout the day.

Transparency

How to go beyond platforms

How to train stakeholders to fight disinformation

Detection & verification tools

Monitoring political landscapes

EU Rapid Alert System: how to make it work

Advertising and information manipulation

Gathering data from Instagram

Attribution

How to define which content to take down

Disinformation techniques : how to detect them and respond

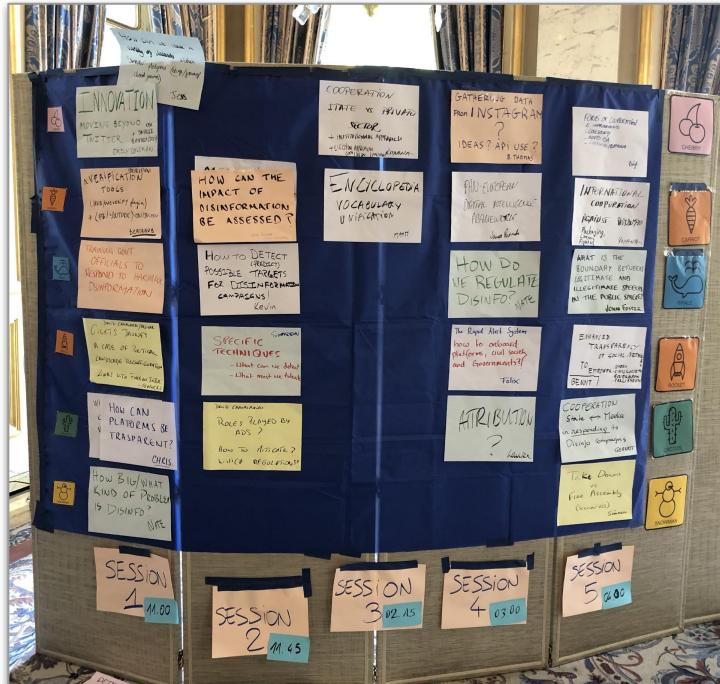
Cooperation with and between platforms

Detection and prediction of disinformation campaigns targets

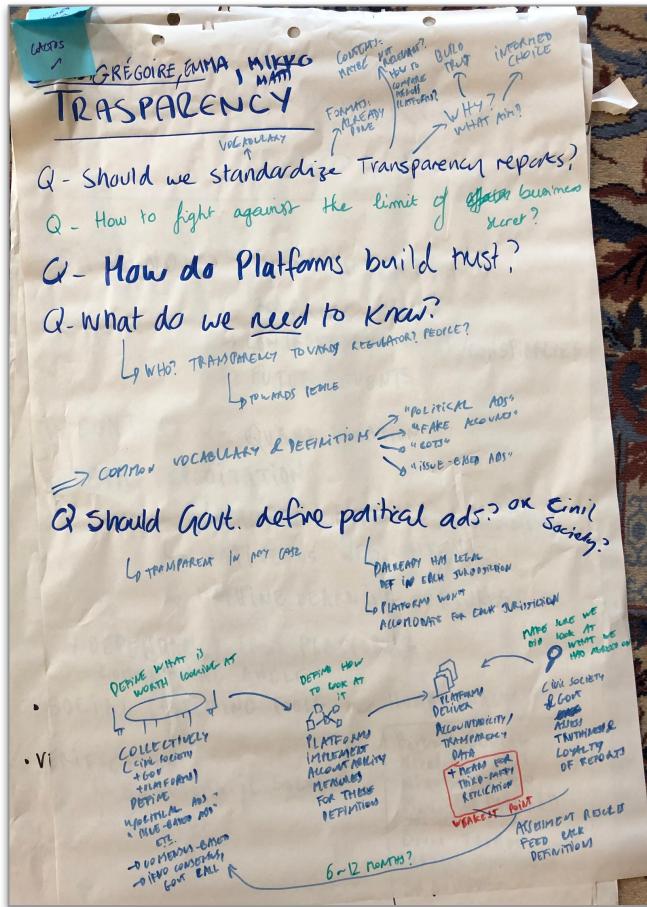
Regulation

Vocabulary unification

How to measure / assess the impact of disinformation and why



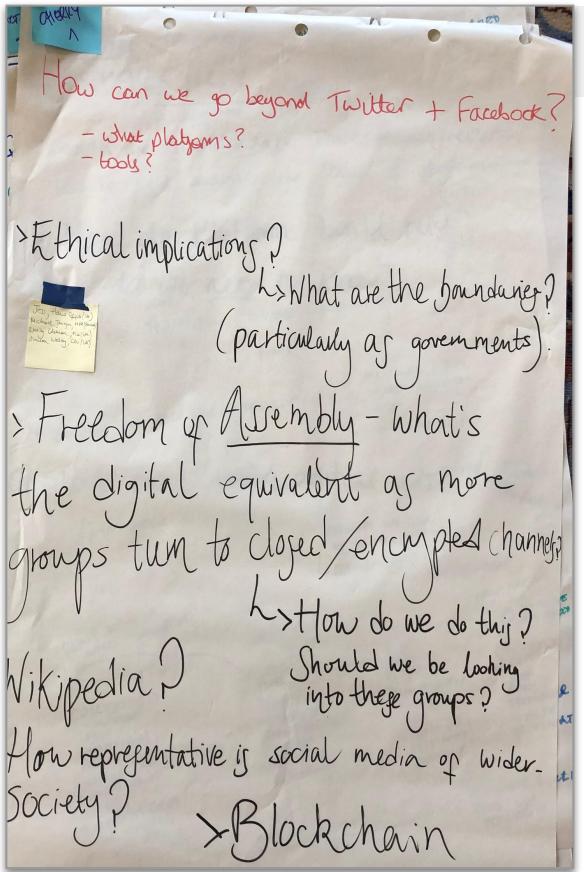
DAY 1: OPEN FORUM



Workshop 1: Transparency

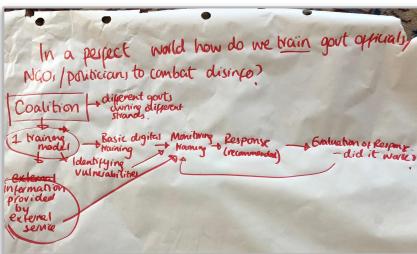
- Discussing the standardization of transparency reports (common vocabulary, format, content, platforms)
- Justifying transparency by trust building and a right to an informed choice
- Discussing existing limits to transparency
- Questioning the initiators and recipients of transparency
- Defining "what is worth looking at" and "how to look at it"
- Drafting accountability and transparency measures for platforms

DAY 1: OPEN FORUM



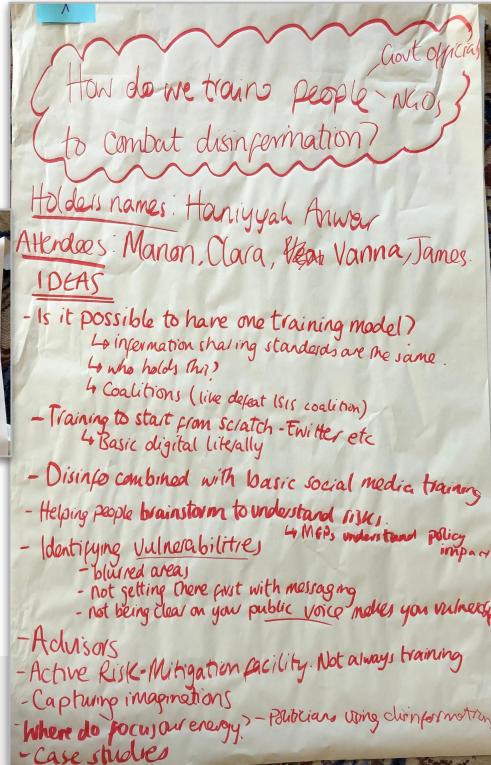
Workshop 2: How to go beyond Twitter & FB?

- Questioning ethical implications and boundaries
- Discussing the “freedom of assembly” on the Internet (closed groups, encrypted channels...)
- Questioning the representativity of social media



- Discussing and drafting a common training model
- Combining media literacy, digital literacy and disinformation awareness
- Identifying vulnerabilities and limits of training

Workshop 3: How to train stakeholders to fight disinformation?



DAY 1: OPEN FORUM



DETECTION / VERIFICATION TOOLS

- DATA VOID IDENTIFICATION
 - ↳ BREAKING NEWS
 - ↳ CONTROVERSY ISSUES / CONSPIRACIES
 - ↳ FUTURE EVENTS
 - CONTEXT VS QUANTIFICATION.
 - DATA EXPLOITATION
 - ↳ IMPACT VS AUDIENCE VS SOURCE CREDIBILITY
 - ↳ NATIVE VS WEB CONTENT
 - ↳ MACHINE LEARNING VERTURES.
 - DEPENDENCY FROM PLATFORMS
 - COMMERCIAL ANGLE
 - SOCIAL LISTENING TOOLS ~ HUMAN ANALYSIS
 - VERIFICATION
 - ↳ NO AUTOMATIC SOLUTION
 - ↳ TOOLBOX
- Bertrand GOUPIL
Nicolas DUPONT
Nicolay PIZZO
Marionne BAILARD
JOHANNE REURINGS
Bruno THOMAS
CHARLES HOUOTOUT
SN BUISSON

Workshop 4: Detection and verification tools

- Diving into data voids issues
- Discussing data exploitation
- Questioning the dependency from platforms
- Highlighting that there is no automatic solution

- Discussing the evolution of and exchanges between political communities on social networks
- Questioning their representativity
- Discussing ways to get more complete, accurate information

Workshop 5 : Monitoring political landscapes

Participants: Nagya PANATH

Marcilio Mafra Margot FRANCOIS
David CHAVALIAS

Béryl BOUJU

Colin GERARD

MONITORING

POLITICAL LANDSCAPES

ELEMENTS OF FOREIGN INFLUENCE
Ex: GILETS JAUNES CASE, ...

Q1: CAN YOU OBSERVE political communities
on other social networks?
→ Exchange of links between different platforms

Q2: To what extent the foreign influenced
this movement on Twitter?

→ What are the exchanges of info between the communities? Getting
Q3: How to assess the representativity of political
communities on Twitter?

Q4: How to detect abnormal event possibly linked to manipulation
→ Work with the platforms to get info correlated to geolocation

DAY 1: OPEN FORUM



How to make the RAS work?

fund researchers & NGOs and aboard them to the platform

common access to tools

regular meetings to share insights across countries

create more topical groups

make it a hub to make more data available, with input from platforms

Felix

Roxane Clinicus

Emily Coleman

John Foster

Workshop 6: How to make the RAS work?

- Considering the funding of researchers & NGOs
- Discussing their onboarding on the RAS platform
- Considering holding regular cross-country meetings
- Suggesting to create more topical groups
- Discussing ways to make more data available

- Discussing market segmentation & micro-targeting
- Discussing the impact of ads & manipulated content
- Discussing (political and issue-based) ads regulation & transparency

Workshop 7: Ads & manipulation

RAS&S2

ADS & MANIPULATION

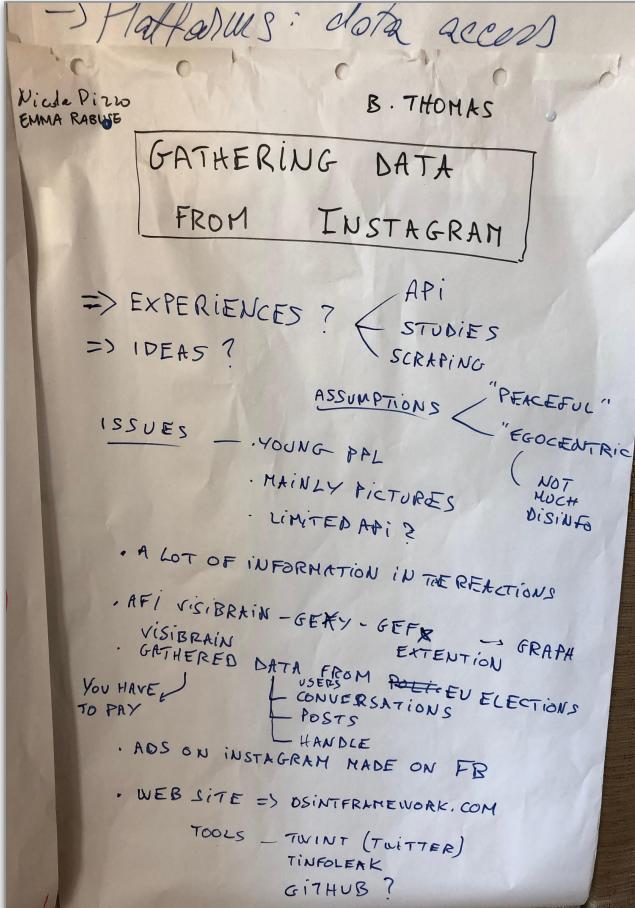
— Market segmentation / micro-targeting
— Serving users?

Q1: Which IMPACT ?
Q2: HOW TO REGULATE ?

- Limit the resolution of the targeting
- limit the number of data which can be crossed for one person
- Annual report on micro-targeting for each user: who targeted me and why?
- Campaign financing / political party financing reform: Obligation to publicise money spent on ads on met - on topics / key words

David Chauvelon
Magjana Ponah
Johanna Möhring
Emily Coleman
Eric Freyssinier
MIKKO SALO

DAY 1: OPEN FORUM



Workshop 8: Gathering data from Instagram

- Sharing experiences in gathering data
- Drafting ways and means to gather data
- Qualifying disinformation issues on Instagram (youth; mainly pictures; limited API...)
- Discussing links between platforms
- Sharing tools to gather data from platforms

DAY 1: OPEN FORUM

Attribution

hacking/cyber
+ legal
disinfo
difference
importance of consistency in
gov. approach
(Attribution an end in itself?
burden of proof
Political decision (not legal)
↳ diplomats/politicians
v. law enforcement/inter

Independent attribution
inc. ~~judiciaries~~
rather than states.
If action being taken, need
attribution to explain (justify)
effectiveness v. public interest
hybrid threats response
↳ militarization?
Civil society plugging into
EU/G7/NATO Response Mechanisms
GDPR - data access
challenges to EU unity
Need to allow TIME for judicial
process

Public v. private attrib.
Open Source issues
↳ gov. → civil soc.
Bellingcat - new platforms
↳ investigative journalism
gov. financing needs transparency
credibility challenge
ethical dilemma of duty of care
New funding models
+ outlets of fact checkers
Attrib. feeds narratives of influence
identification v. engagement/response.

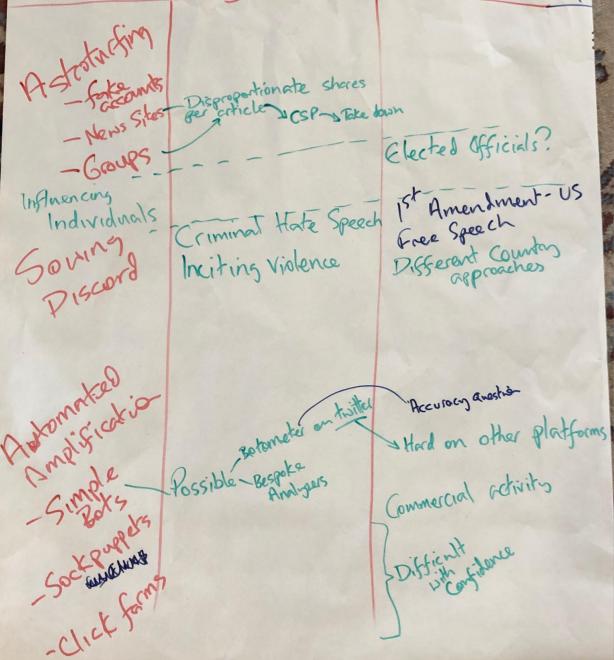
Workshop 9: Attribution

- Explaining the legal difference between cyberattacks and disinformation
- Highlighting the importance of consistency in governmental approaches
- Questioning the relevance and the aftermath of attribution
- Differentiating between legal decision and political decision
- Differentiating between public and private attribution
- Highlighting the ethical dilemmas of post-attribution (lack of) reaction (effectiveness v. public interest, duty of care, justification...)
- Exploring the credibility challenge for governments and the role of investigative journalists
- Discussing the involvement of civil society plugging into international / interorganizational response mechanisms
- Discussing the challenges to EU unity

DAY 1: OPEN FORUM

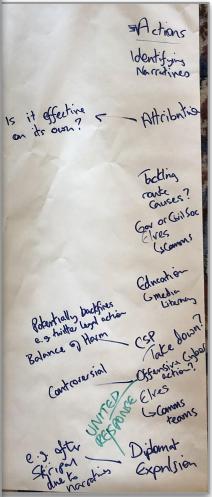
Simeon
Laura
Charles
Nida

Specific Techniques of Disinfo & How to detect them & Response. Detection Tolerance



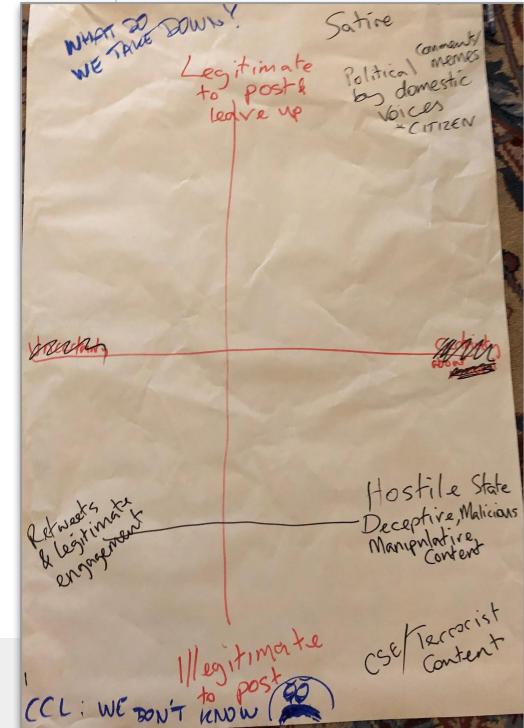
Workshop 10: What content is legitimate to take down?

- Discussing how to determine which content to take down
- Questioning the relevance of takedowns



Workshop 11 : Specific disinformation techniques

- Gathering and exploring known disinformation techniques
- Accounting for ways to detect, tolerate and act on them



DAY 1: OPEN FORUM



COOPERATION
PLATFORM

STATE
PRIVATE
CIVIL SOC.
MEDIA
RAS

- What should Gov. do?
- How to provide data?
- How can we create a safer space?
- Platforms: data access

Workshop 12: Cooperation with & between platforms

FB

RESPONSIBILITY

BUILDING TRUST

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

RAS + G7 + NATO

PLATFORMS - TOUCH POINTS?

KPIs

1. Clear mechanism of cooperation (transparency)
2. Common definitions
3. Transparency - algorithm - humans
4. Communication/PR/Marketing Tools

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
OF THIS WORKSHOP

- Jessica Lawrence
- Margot François
- Marc-Pascal Dahan
- Eric Freyssinet
- John-Marc Töhring
- Emma Rabute
- Nikko Salo
- Gernot Streitmayer
- Billy Glavin
- Clara Hanot
- Orna Preys
- Michael Jensen
- Jan-Noé Bisson
- Nicole Pizzo
- Michel Blanchar
- Mauro Elascardi
- Nate Miller
- Andrew Golven
- Soline Ledesert

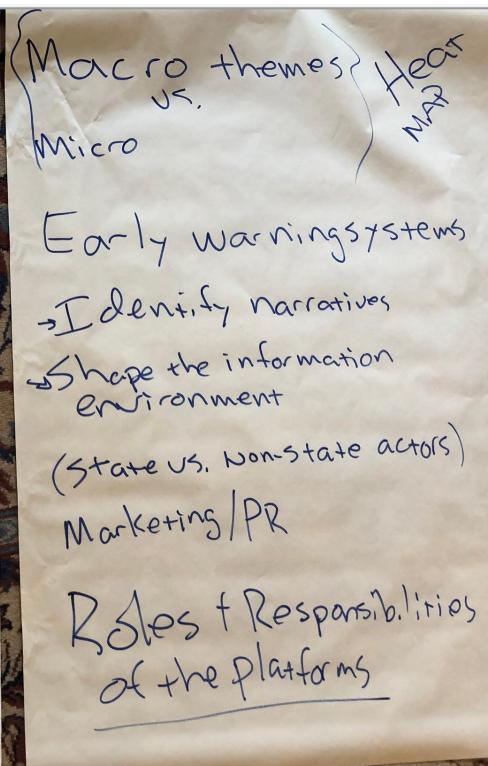
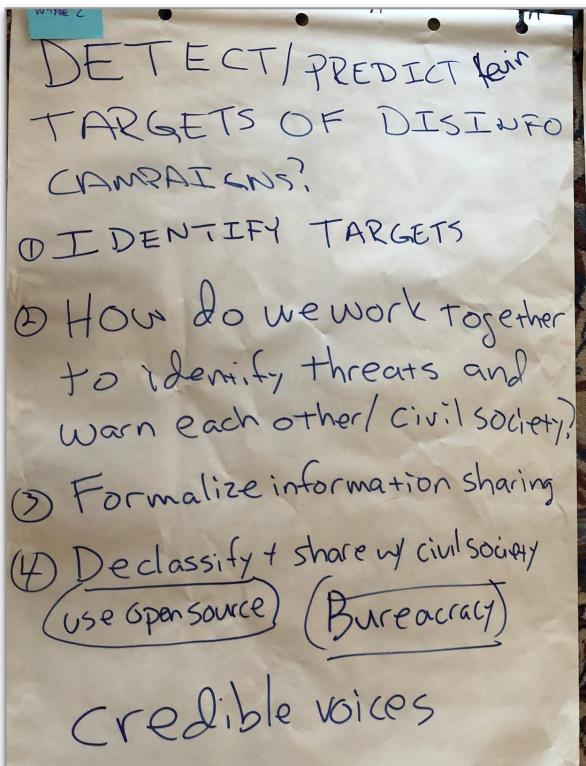
• Charles Houltouze

MODERATOR:
ROXANA

- Discussing ways to enhance cooperation between platforms, state actors, civil society and media
- Acknowledging the need for better, safe data access
- Discussing platforms responsibility in building trust
- Discussing international & inter-organizational cooperation
- Highlighting key performance indicators

DAY 1: OPEN FORUM

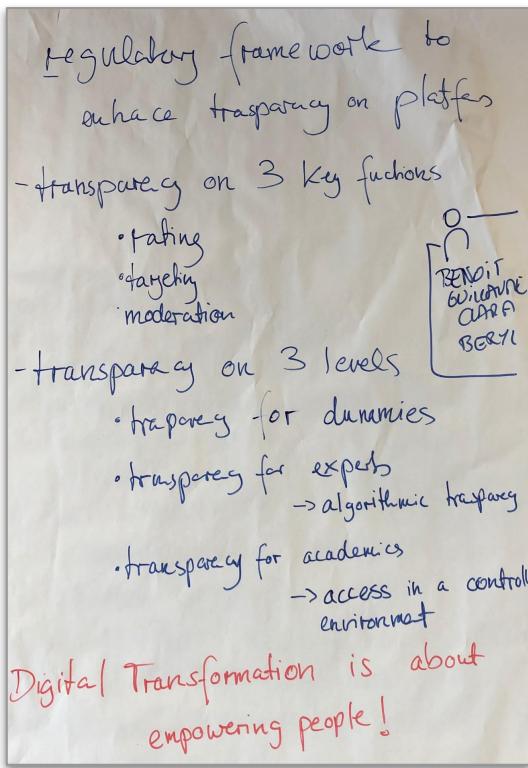
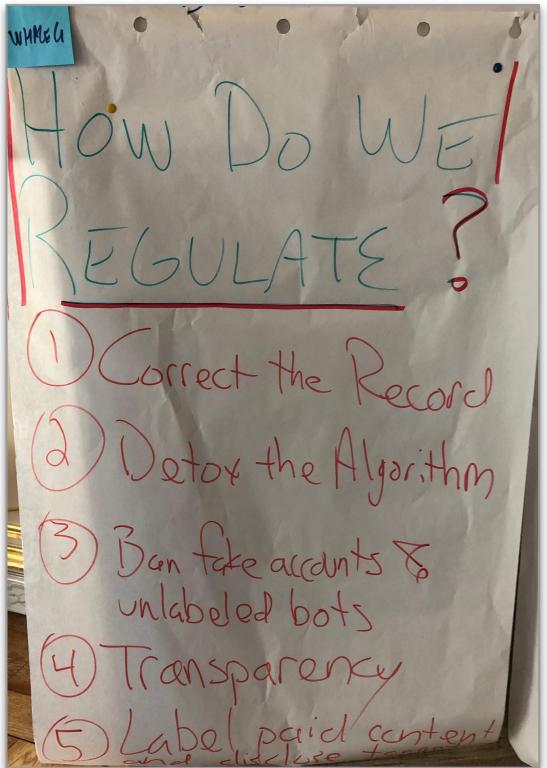
Workshop 13: How to detect / predict targets of disinformation campaigns?



- Discussing ways to identify (potential) targets and threats
- Drafting means for actors to warn each other
- Discussing the formalization of information sharing - and with whom to share it
- Highlight the importance of narratives and their identification
- Discuss the shaping of the information environment
- Question the role and responsibility of platforms

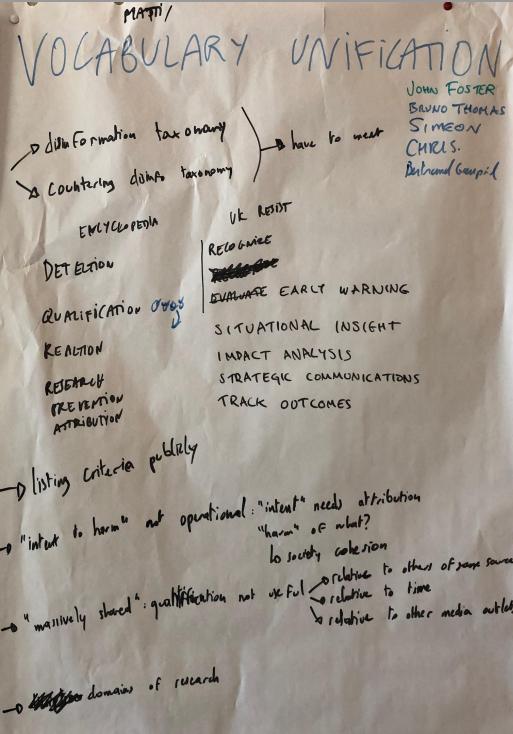
DAY 1: OPEN FORUM

Workshop 14: How do we regulate?



- Accounting for ways to regulate and prevent disinformation:
 - Correct the record
 - Detox the Algorithm
 - Ban fake accounts & unlabeled bots
 - Transparency ;
 - Label paid content and disclose targets
- Drafting a regulatory framework to enhance transparency on platforms
- Defining key functions of transparency
- Defining levels and recipients for transparency
- Highlighting the importance of empowering the civil society as well

DAY 1: OPEN FORUM

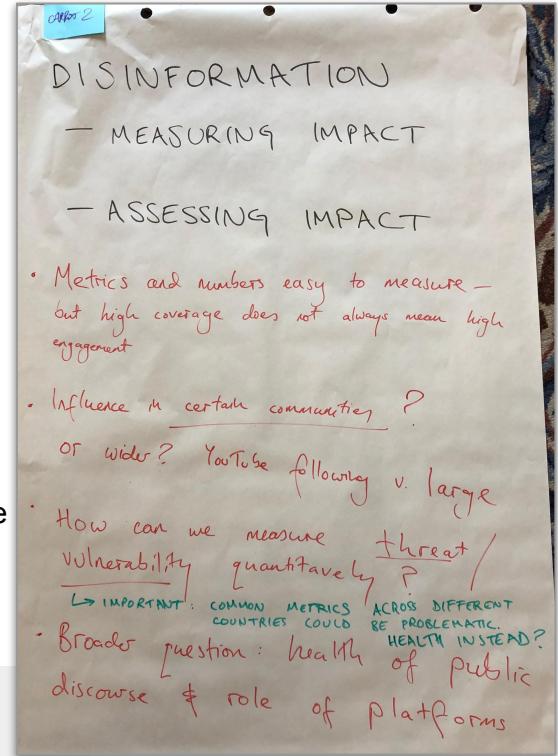


Workshop 15: Vocabulary unification

- Discussing the drafting of a taxonomy of (the fight against) disinformation
- Presenting a phased approach to the process of fighting disinformation
- Discussing UK RESIST framework
- Discussing criteria and ways to qualify disinformation

- Highlighting the discrepancy between coverage and engagement
- Discussing the scope of influence
- Discussing ways to quantitatively measure threat level and vulnerability
- Questioning the health of the public discourse & role of platforms

Workshop 16: Measuring the impact of disinformation



DAY 1: OPEN FORUM FEEDBACK



What was your unexpected moment of the day?

- **Diversity** and variety of **actors**, interested and involved (public officials, practitioners, researchers, analysts, private sector, civil society, platforms, etc)
- Various **countries**, **backgrounds** and **points of view**
- **Increasing number** of practitioners
- Despite such diversity, actors seem like-minded and oriented towards more openness and transparency
- The prestigious **room**: this conversation deserves such a spot but rarely gets one

What will you do differently on Monday?

- Focus on a **European, international level** rather than merely national
- Foster further interactions and improve cooperation with the **civil society**
- **Connect, share and disseminate** more with the various partners discovered here
- Take the time to reflect around the **ethics** of takedown and other drastic measures
- Try, rely on and develop the new **ideas and tools** discovered here
- Focus on **narratives** rather than tackle individual campaigns day-to-day
- Observe disinformation as a **symptom** rather than a problem
- Focus on **training** stakeholders, media literacy and building common concepts

DAY 1: OPEN FORUM FEEDBACK



What are the main obstacles this event shed light on?
What is hard to do for practitioners?

- (Re)define disinformation
- Define **success** in tackling disinformation
- Determine a field, a level of desirability, and a realistic speed for **regulation**
- Assess the actual **impact** of disinformation
- Incentivize (EU) public officials to act, platforms to cooperate, the civil society and especially the youth to engage
- Educate on the discrepancy between **democracy** and **economic efficiency**, on the link between disinformation and advertising schemes on platforms

Which topics / elements deserve more attention when dealing with disinformation?

- Citizens' **expectations**
- **Justice**
- **Journalism**

DAY 1: OPEN FORUM FEEDBACK



Ideas to go further

- Go beyond mere information **sharing**
- Build **functional tools for action**
- Draft **action plans** specific to each disinformation issue
- Plan other **international workshops** on disinformation
- Stabilize **transparency reports**
- Draft an **ethical, methodological** framework on regulation
- Who could be **allies** and **where** to find them? What **issues** are we missing?

Additional remarks

- The **RAS** is underexploited. We can and should do more.
- We need to think about what kind of **democracy** we want.
- If disinformation is but a **symptom**, we need to think more broadly, to combine the points of view, *modus operandi* and contexts of **various actors**.

DAY 2: HACKATHON



During the **pitch session**, participants proposed subjects for concrete work.
Teams of 3 to 5 people then formed to produce prototypes throughout the day.
Pitches and trainings by Social Science One researchers and Facebook team.



Trainings & pitches

Social Science One
research topics

CrowdTangle API

Introduction to
differential privacy

Facebook URLs
dataset

All-day Hackathon

Ads spending
spatial distribution

Ads spending evolution
consistency

Media Scale
localisation

CoFacts chatbot
localisation

Fact-checking
efficiency

Hackathon results presentation

Closing remarks

DAY 2: HACKATHON

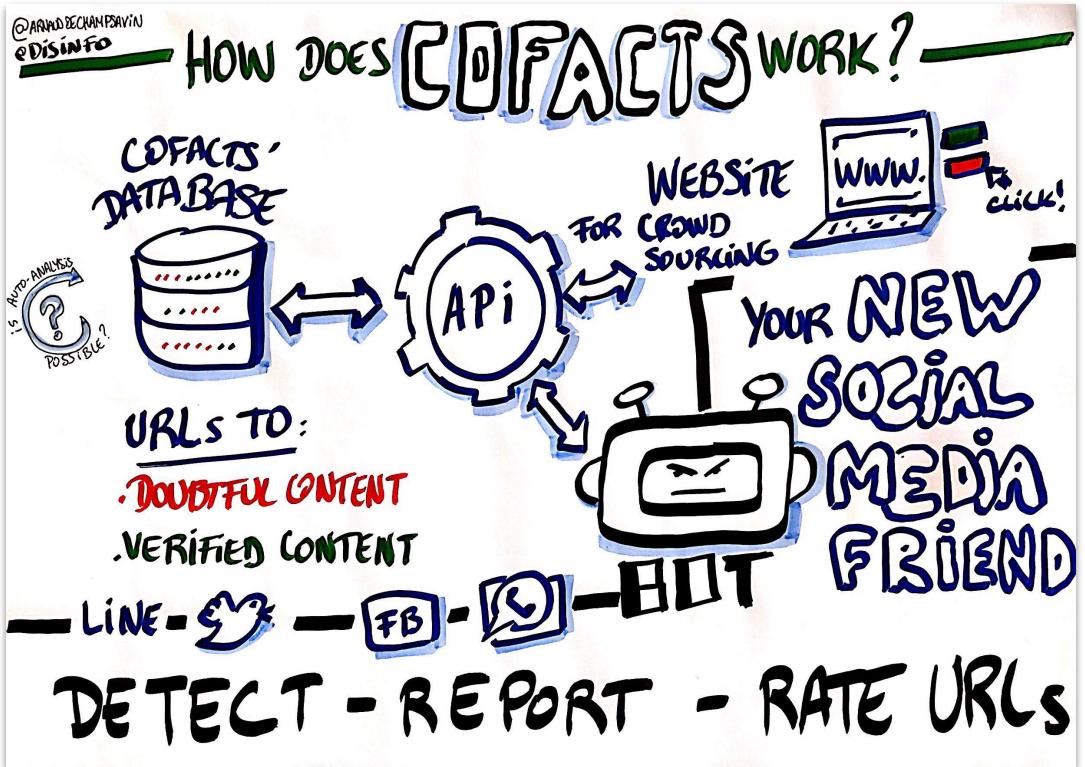
Morning Workshop - Facebook's Social Science One partnership

In the morning, a workshop held by Facebook's Social Science One team invited participants to try out the data made available by the program to academic researchers and explore the related privacy constraints.



DAY 2: HACKATHON

CoFacts Chatbot



The open-source, Taiwanese fact-checking project CoFacts gathers a 20,000+ fact-checking community on the messaging app LINE in a crowdsourcing effort. Its chatbot allows users to **report content**, consolidated in a hoax database.

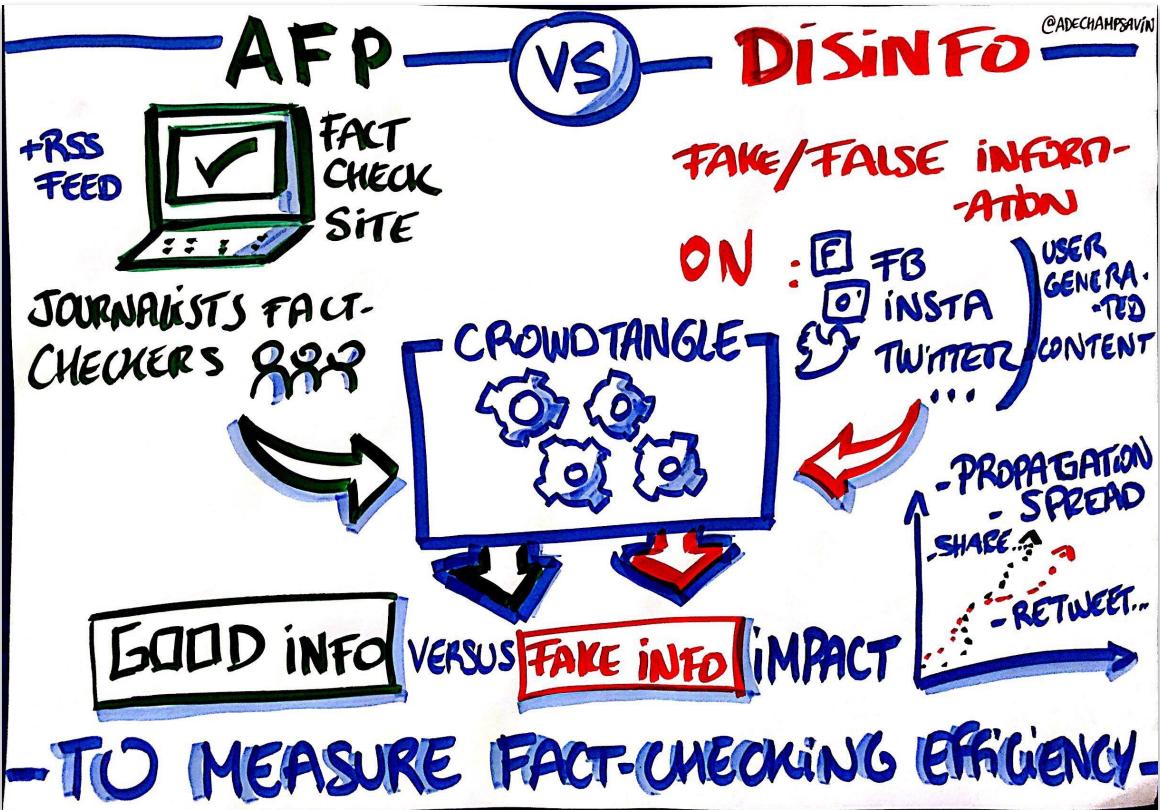
Participants to the workshop **adapted it to a French and then international context** to detect, report and rate URLs to both doubtful and verified content from LINE but also Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp.

Beyond the hackathon, the team envisions a database of suspicious content and related URLs and fact-checks, available through an API and open to public contributions through content reporting, asking for content to be fact-checked as well as tagging already-checked content.

Certified fact-checkers from renowned media outlets have already been contacted to feed the future database and collaborate to the project.

DAY 2: HACKATHON

Fact-checking efficiency



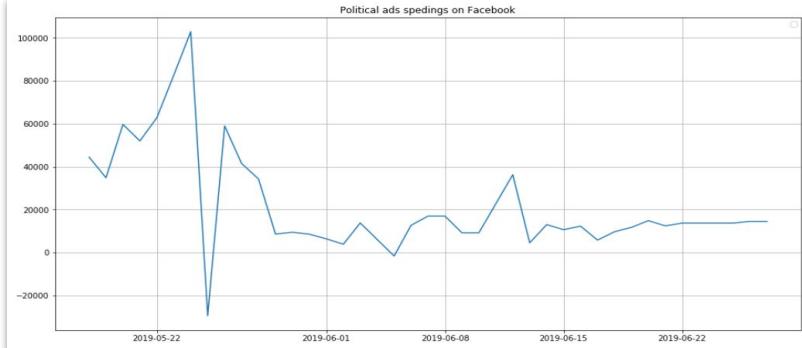
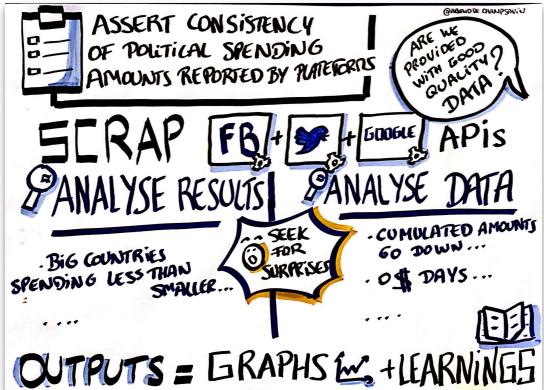
In order to assess the efficiency of fact-checking in limiting the spread of disinformation, participants relied on the AFP's (Agence France Presse, a journalism agency) website and used the Crowdtangle API to study the **propagation and spreading speed** of false user generated content on social media.



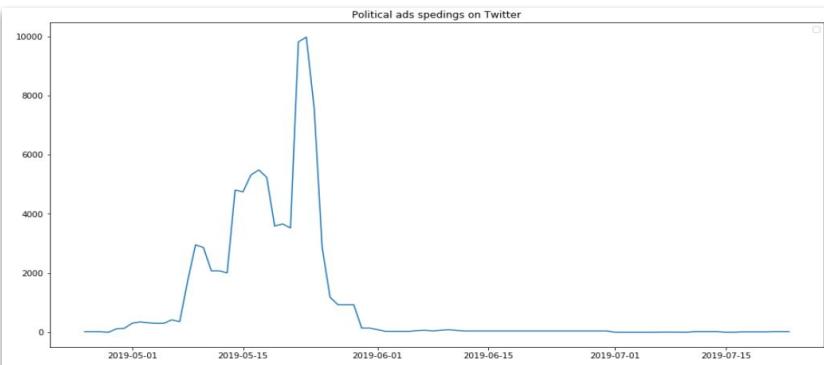
DAY 2: HACKATHON

Consistency of spending amounts reported by platforms

One team focused on the amounts spent on political ads displayed on social media depending on countries and platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Google). They assessed the quality of the data provided by platforms on this topic by analyzing and comparing daily total amounts reported by platforms, and looking for **oddities** in the results, such as higher amounts for smaller countries, decreases in cumulative amounts reported, or entire days without any spending reported.



Political ads spendings on Facebook in euros (22 May - 22 June 2019)



Political ads spendings on Twitter in euros (01 May - 01 July 2019)

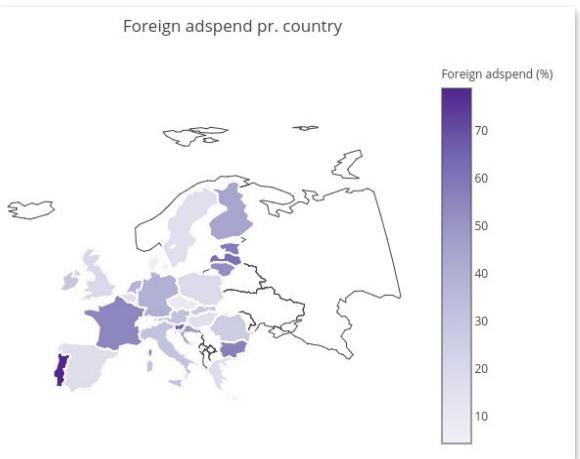
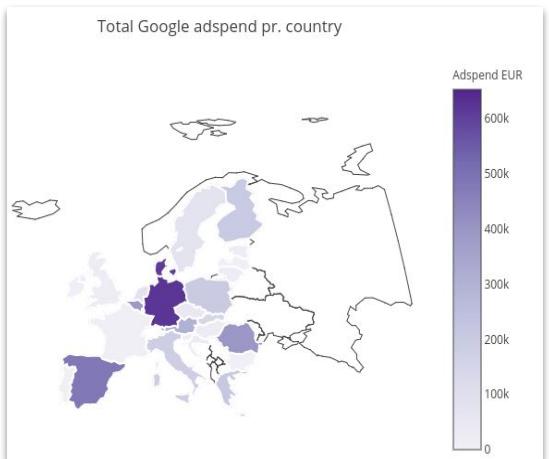
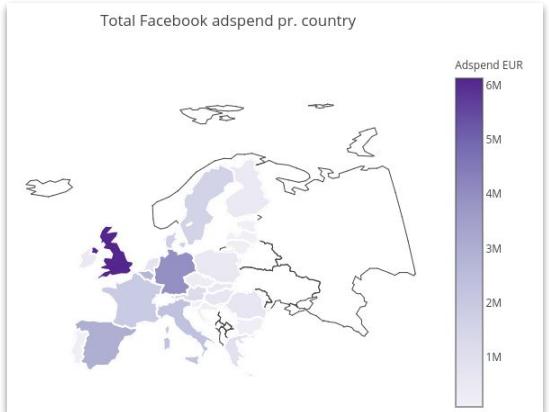
Inconsistencies were not found in Twitter's reports. However, the team found that Facebook sometimes reported negative values for whole days, as shown on the graphs.

DAY 2: HACKATHON

Ads spending spatial distribution



Another team focused on the spatial distribution of advertising spendings. Rather than comparing across platforms, it compared **spendings across countries**. Beyond spendings by local politicians, it also explored how **foreign funds were used to display ads** in each country. Results were presented on graphs displayed here.



DAY 2: HACKATHON

Media Scale localisation

The team of the French Ambassador for Digital Affairs had developed a **collaborative chat** for actors of the fight against information manipulation. It offers users several **tools as chatbots**, one of them being a **scale of relevance** of a given article depending on its **national context**. However, it was available for France only.



media-scale BOT 6:03 PM

500000 shares for a United Kingdom article, it is comparable to:

Airwolf star Jan-Michael Vincent dies aged 74 after suffering cardiac arrest
Daily Mail, [article](#) published on March 8, 2019

Why eating less meat is the best thing you can do for the planet in 2019
The Guardian, [article](#) published on December 21, 2018

Mysterious radio signals from deep space
BBC, [article](#) published on January 9, 2019

During the hackathon, **a team adapted it to a British context**. Users can now compare the relevance of British articles based on the number of times they were shared in major news outlets such as The Daily Mail, The Guardian and the BBC.

CLOSING REMARKS



“Platform operators have to acknowledge their responsibilities and act accordingly. Although regulation is not necessarily the answer, completely autonomous self-regulation is not desirable.”

Henri Verdier, French Ambassador for Digital Affairs

“Information is at the heart of our democratic processes. It is important to act on a collaborative, international basis to tackle the issues related to disinformation, including through the elaboration of common tools.”

Frédéric Journès, Director of international, technological and strategic affairs at the French Secretariat General for Defense and National Security



“What we are trying to do today, here with the French government, creates a precedent and should serve as an inspiration for other countries around the world.”

Nathaniel Persily, Doctor at Stanford University of Law & Academic supervisor of the Social Science One - Facebook partnership

Thank you for contributing!

HACK

Room



HACK OPEN

