THE FAKE TIMES WE LIVE IN

Fake news is a complicated challenge. Fake news is created, written and published usually "with the intent to *mislead* in order to *damage* an agency, entity, or person, and/or *gain* financially or politically, often using sensationalist, dishonest, or outright fabricated headlines to *increase readership*, online *sharing*, and Internet click". – WIKIPEDIA

"We live in a time in which notions of objectivity is under attack, facts and evidence are being undermined or in some cases ignored entirely. We must dig, question and counter distortions. We must take a stand on what is true".

The single strong message in the "Obama out" speech,
White House, May 2016

We talk about post-truth politics, but we must end the era of post-truth everything. This is the only way to move forward as a civilisation, nation and global economy.

Who is to blame?

- <u>Blame citizen participation?</u> Journalists and the news-media engage in the pursuit of informing citizens – and *now we inform each-other* via Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and the likes, to hold our leaders accountable and for making the democratic government of the people possible, and for sharing everyday stories. But do we care about truth-seeking?

- <u>Blame social media business models?</u> The new business models of social-media tech-giants is one where *the speed of sharing is more important than the depth of information*. Spreading fake news can be an indirect effect of an innocent business model, or it can be intentional. Clickbait stories and headlines earn advertising revenue from this activity. This is very unproductive entrepreneurship and the worse innovation anything can think of.

But if the truth on which we build is not there – the foundation is gone – we gain miss-trust in the media. Real news may be branded or understood as fake news, and fake news may be branded as real. The news media and internet business models must be about shining light on the truth every day.
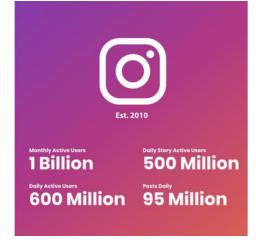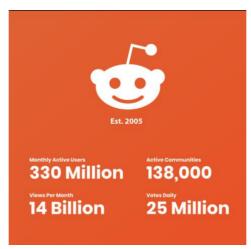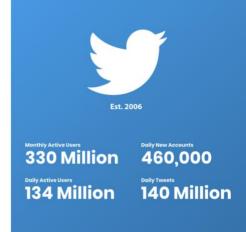
Facebook

Est. 2004

Monthly Active Users	Mobile Users
2.4 Billion	88%

Daily Active Users	Daily Time Spent
1.6 Billion	58 Mins

YouTube

Est. 2005

Monthly Active Users	Daily Video Views
1.9 Billion	5 Billion

Daily Active Users	Average Visit Duration
149 Million	40 Minutes

WhatsApp

Est. 2009

Monthly Active Users	Daily New Users
1.5 Billion	1 Million

Daily Active Users	Messages Daily
1 Billion	60 Billion

Instagram

Est. 2010

Monthly Active Users	Daily Story Active Users
1 Billion	500 Million

Daily Active Users	Posts Daily
600 Million	95 Million

Reddit

Est. 2005

Monthly Active Users	Active Communities
330 Million	138,000

Views Per Month	Votes Daily
14 Billion	25 Million

Twitter

Est. 2006

Monthly Active Users	Daily New Accounts
330 Million	460,000

Daily Active Users	Daily Tweets
134 Million	140 Million

Snapchat

Est. 2011

Monthly Active Users	Daily Video Views
301 Million	10 Billion

Daily Active Users	Daily Snaps
109 Million	3 Billion

LinkedIn

Est. 2002

Monthly Active Users	Total Company Pages
303 Million	30 Million

Monthly New Accounts	Average Visit Duration
5.3 Million	10 Minutes

Pinterest

Est. 2010

Monthly Active Users	Average Visit Duration
291 Million	14 Minutes

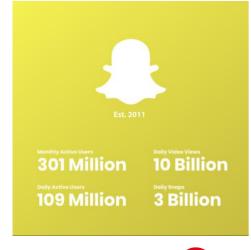| Total Boards Created	Total Pins Created
1 Billion	175 Billion

DEEP-FAKE

Who is to blame?

- Blame strategic propaganda & post truth-politics? Fake news as propaganda in the old Greece or old China or Russia worked, but didn't travel far. But because of technology and the internet it can now go viral. But it does not stop here. We now talk about Deep-Fake. This is when *a true highlight is converted* into a realistic manipulated video or audio used *to manipulate or fabricate another 'truth'*.

Using AI we manipulate news content (pictures, images, text-messages) for the purpose of grooming people to believe in it. This kind of grooming on the internet is now too often the name of the game.

But we are now up against AI professionalism in this sphere.

- Blame AI professionalism? Cambridge Analytica combined mining and data analysis with strategic communication for the US electoral process, and it was *able to direct specific Fake News at a specifically targeted social group according to profiles* traced through social networks such as Facebook.

Fact-checking over the Brexit referendum and elections has been challenged in a similar vein, moving the discussion of trade agreements to making supposedly real choices over illegal immigration and the battle of "taking back control".

> *You can argue about robots and jobs, taxation and the economy, but when it comes to fake news, how can you argue with that? If you try, it becomes validified as 'real news'.*

SHERLOCK HOLMES FOR THE POST-MILLENNIAL

How do we win the war on fake news? Is the answer to create media literacy? To recognize fake news, understand why it goes viral and develop strategies to fight it. Shall we become digital detectives, like a rebooted version of Sherlock Holmes for the post-Millennial generation?

Scandinavia and Finland have introduced a checklist of 'methods used to deceive readers on social media' - image and video manipulations, half-truths, intimidation and false profiles. Finnish schools *teach children the check-list for the truth before 'sharing' and 'liking' online content*. *(CNN Special Report, May 2019)*

We must compare stock photos, assess the volume of posts per day (where fake news are re-pushed), check for inconsistent translations of the same story, and a lack of information to back up claims. Also, "who has written this? Where has it been published? Can I find the same information from another source?"

We must combine fact-checking with critical thinking. But it is *very* annoying having to fact-check everything, not being able to trust anything! Could new digital technology like Blockchain help? Companies are now emerging claiming that blockchain which is developed to protect authors' rights, can be adjusted to also fact-check stories authenticity, AI can help too.

THE SUPER-POWERS

The 'superpower' is knowing our identity, values, ethics. Fake news works best when capitalism doesn't. *When people have lost trust in the establishment fake news works easier, usually enforcing notions of racism, nationalism, populism*. The aim is usually to impact political elections, generate hate and discrimination, by reinforcing sentiments.

The small and largely homogenous counties (as Denmark, Norway and Finland) now consistently rank at or near the top of almost every index – *happiness, press freedom, gender equality, social justice, transparency and education*. This makes it difficult for external actors to find fissures within society to open and exploit.

Does the dilemma lie in the fact that we are not creating purposeful societies?

Are parliamentarians and political leaders themselves part of the problem – in their debate styles – or not being great examples on how we shall address news or facts?

Fake news which favoured Donald Trump was shared 30 million times in the three months before the election, four times more than false stories favouring Hillary Clinton. (BBC Report, January 2017). Is the UK safeguarding such phenomenon is not happening here?

FIGHTING FAKE NEWS

Questions that need to be addressed urgently in the fight against fake news.

Fake News

- **Is misinformation an existential crisis or the new normal?**
- How can we tell when something is true? Is there anything new about fake news, or has it **always existed**?

Politics

- Facebook, Twitter, Google and the tech-giants are all signatories to the European Commission's Code of Practice against disinformation – but are the **ethics codes** strong enough or rightly implemented and enforced?
- Do Social Media giants and regulators need to work together to ensure that their **platforms and algorithms** aren't corrosive to the quality of public discourse?
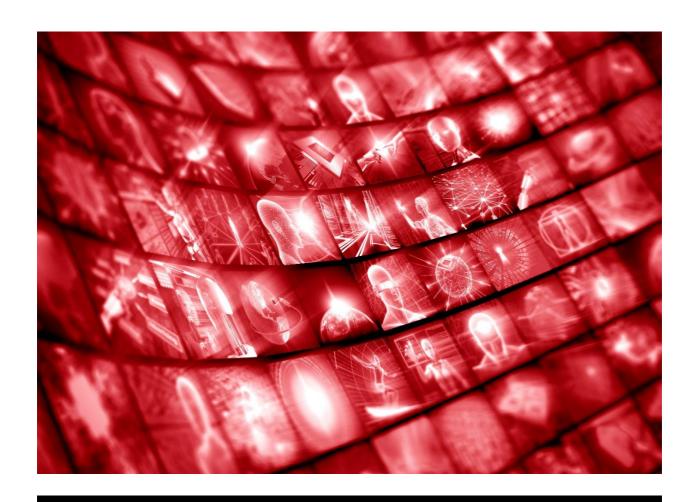- Should there be **penalties** for producing fake news?

Society

- Are we just **fed up** with the establishment and the voices from Parliament? Are they partly to blame for their style or arguing on 'facts' and running campaigns?
- Could we argue that fake news works because capitalism doesn't? Have we **lost trust** in the capitalist system and in society, so that truth-seeking has no value, but populism takes over?
- Is social media to blame, or do we all live in **echo chambers** and reject anything that contradicts our worldview – or is the epidemic of fake news an expression of something broader?

You!

- Is the answer to create media **literacy**? To teach children and adults how to recognise fake news, understand why it goes viral and develop personal strategies to fight it? Shall we become **digital detectives** (before we 'like' or 'share' online, like a rebooted version of Sherlock Holmes?
- But it is very annoying having to fact check everything and not being able to trust anything! Why not use **AI and Blockchain** to do that? Is the governance of the digital media the problem or the solution here?

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