

The Boundaries of Disinformation

Workshop 2020 12 02

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- Epistemology: **Åsa Wikforss** (Stockholm University)
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Boundaries of Disinformation under Digitalization and Hyperconnectivity

...makes content creation and dissemination easy

avoiding the traditional gatekeeping mechanisms of publishers, (predefined) media, (existing) institutions, universities and governments.

(Joshua Bronson and Susanne Stenberg)

CAN WE ESTABLISH NEW GATEKEEPERS

WHO WOULD

- tell the difference between *managing disinformation and censoring*
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Phenomenon of Disinformation is Old and Omnipresent

Historical examples of disinformation are many:

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/anthropology-in-practice/three-historical-examples-of-fake-news/> Three Historical Examples of "Fake News"

War- and political propaganda and counterpropaganda.

We meet information and disinformation on a daily basis on both micro- meso- and macro- (global) scales.

What is new?

Content production out of control

"The idea that different people can get a piece of paper that states the same thing is powerful. It's equalizing. It's easy to trust the information in this case because **accepting that a huge group of people are being misled is, well, unbelievable**. There isn't a way to prevent fake news entirely but it starts with **critical reading and conversations**."

P a r a l l e l s t o " d i r e c t d e m o c r a c y " ?

Not only general public / "ordinary people" have got voice that can reach around the globe, but also [politicians can directly tweet to their followers circumventing democratic goalkeepers.](#)

Phenomenon of "informational bubbles"

Social networks, electronic web-based media, digital platforms, web bots – provide dangerous ways for disinformation to uncontrollably develop.

Automated means and AI for fighting disinformation bring their own challenges

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624278/EPRS_STU\(2019\)624278_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624278/EPRS_STU(2019)624278_EN.pdf) Automated tackling of disinformation



Figure 3: 7 Categories of Information Disorder (Credit: Claire Wardle, First Draft)

TYPES OF INFORMATION DISORDER

FALSENESS

INTENT TO HARM

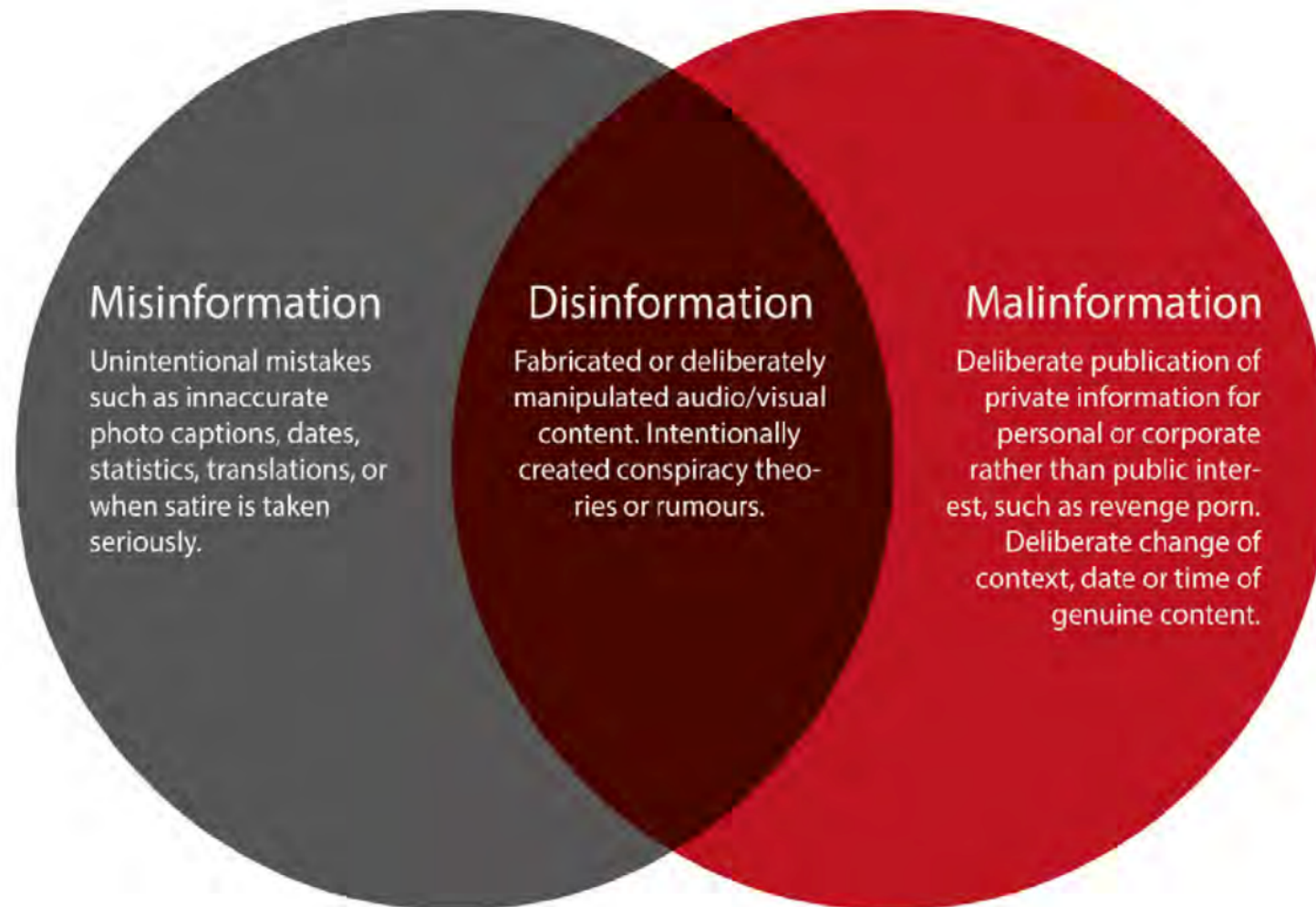
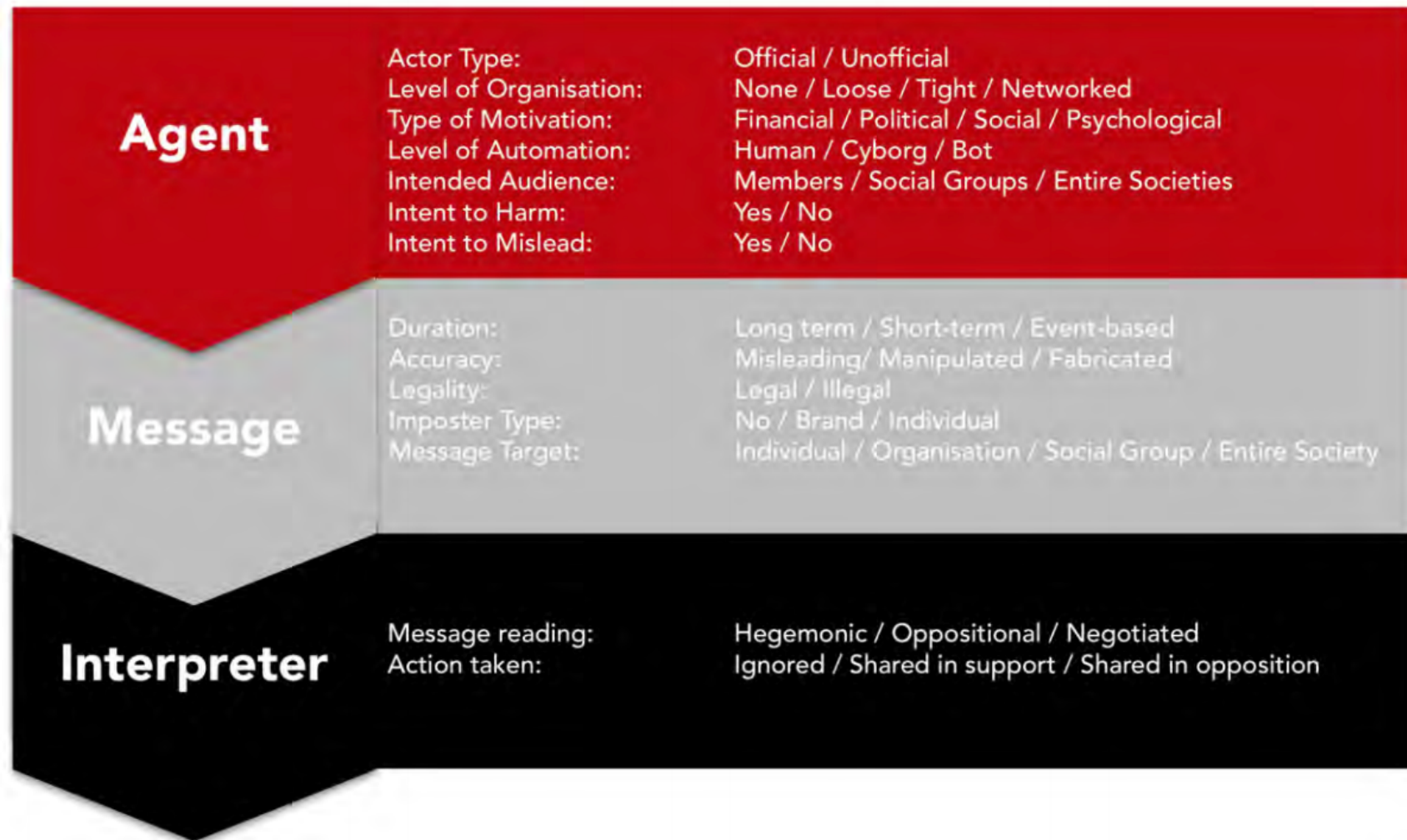


Figure 5: The Three Elements of Information Disorder



ETHICAL ASPECTS OF DISINFORMATION

We can think in terms of classical ethical theories

Utilitarianism

Disinformation as way of communication is detrimental for society at large, gains only those who control it.

Kantian ethics (deontology)

Disinformation goes against Categorical Imperative: Act according to the maxim that you would wish all other people to follow, as if it were a universal law.

Virtue ethics

Falsehood and intent to harm are vices.

Value-based human-centric ethics

Disinformation shows lack of: respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, transparency, fairness,, etc.

ETHICAL ASPECTS OF DISINFORMATION

Each of classical ethical theories reveal different types of problems with disinformation, but here is one modern approach which is especially apt for analysis, modelling and practical approaches to disinformation and that is INFORMATION ETHICS.

What is Information Ethics?

Microsoft Research Laboratory - PhD students summer school 2006

Cambridge
6 July, 2006

luciano.floridi@philosophy.oxford.ac.uk
www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk/~floridi/

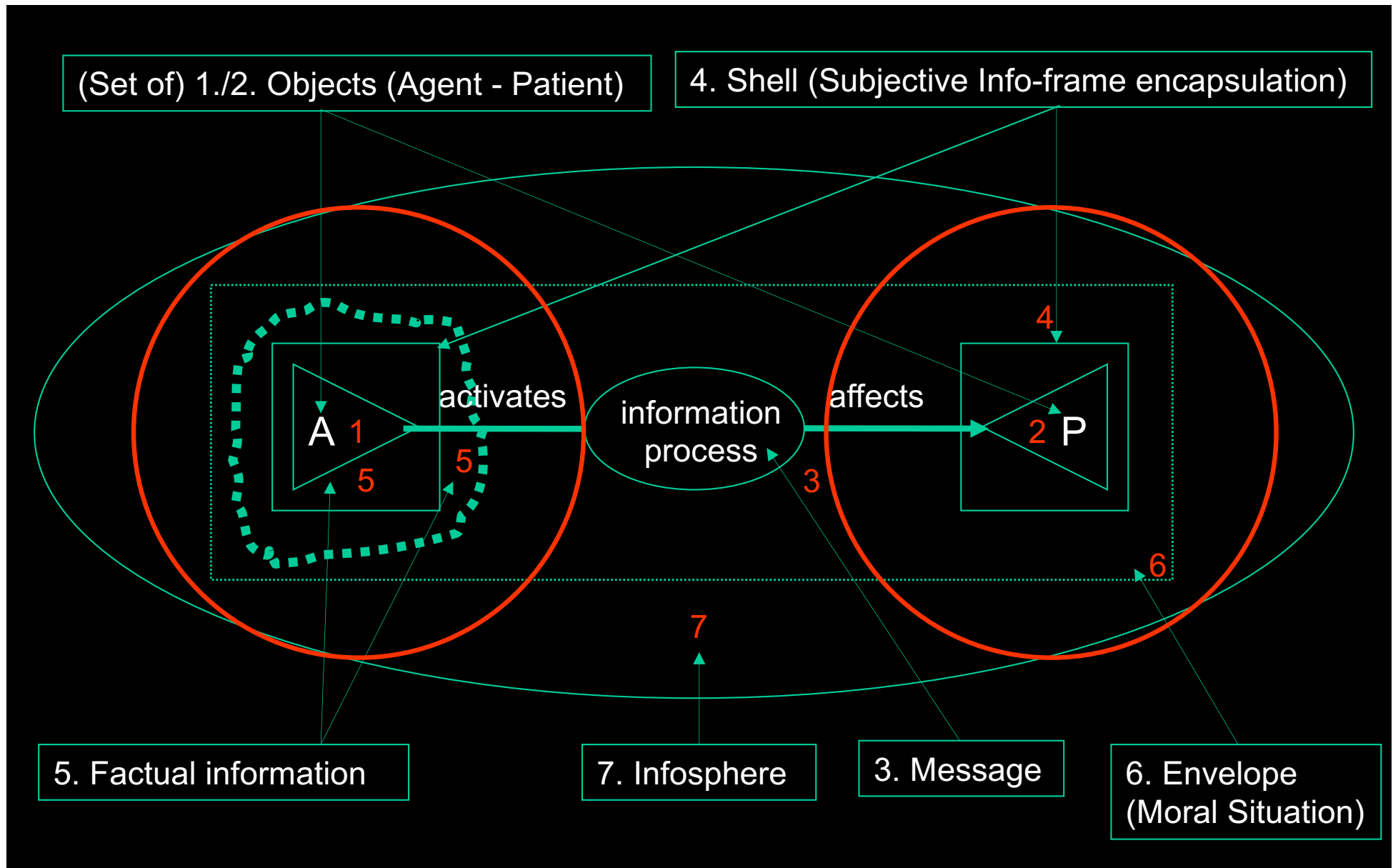
Luciano Floridi

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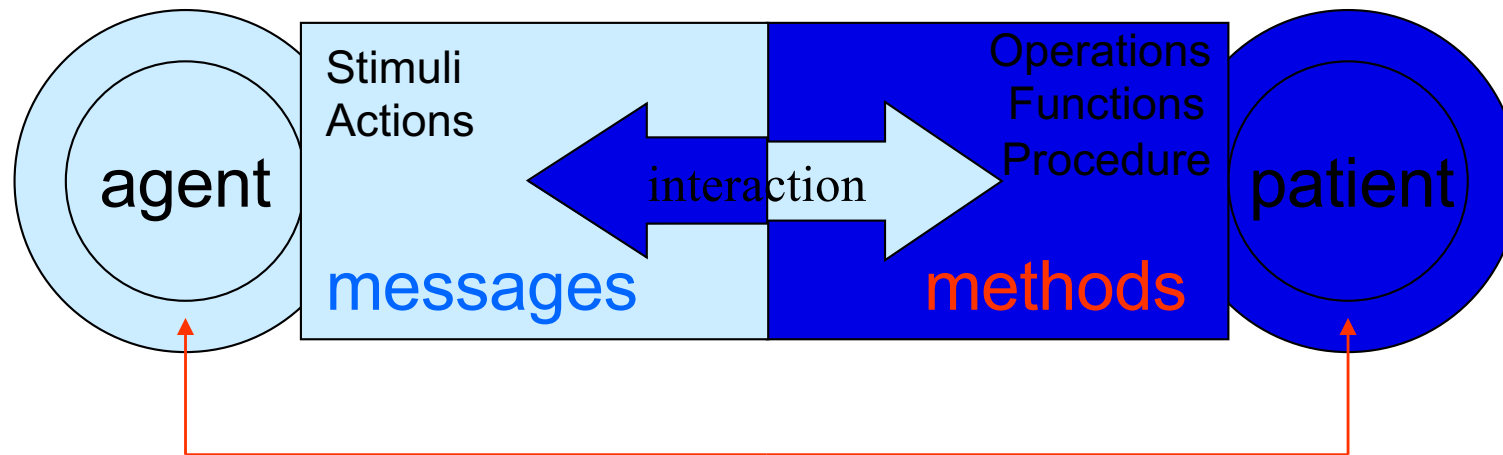


The informational Model of Moral Action



Informational Entities

Moral action = information process



data structures constituting the nature of the entity in question (state of the object, its unique identity, and attributes)

Floridi, L. A defence of informational structural realism. *Synthese* 161, 219–253 (2008).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-007-9163-z>

Floridi's informational structural realist basis for info-computational modelling of cognizing agents. Gordana Dodig-Crnkovic *Journal of Experimental & Theoretical Artificial Intelligence* Volume 27, 2015 - Issue 1: Inforgs and the Infosphere: Themes from Luciano Floridi's Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/en-us-events-2006summerschool-lucianofloridi.ppt>

ETHICS AS NETWORK OF INFORMATION PROCESSES

Floridi's Information Ethics (IE) is a new theoretical foundation of Ethics. For IE, **moral action is an information processing pattern**. IE addresses the fundamentally informational character of our interaction with the world, including interactions with other agents. According to

Floridi, **ICTs create our new informational habitat**. "Infosphere denotes the informational environment constituted by all informational entities (including informational agents, their properties, interactions, processes and mutual relations)." Our increasingly informational environment is an abstract equivalent of an eco-system.

Dodig-Crnkovic G. (2012) Floridi's Information Ethics as Macro-ethics and Info-computational Agent-Based Models. In: Demir H. (eds) Luciano Floridi's Philosophy of Technology. Philosophy of Engineering and Technology, vol 8. Springer, Dordrecht.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4292-5_1

ETHICS AS NETWORK OF INFORMATION PROCESSES

Unlike majority of classical ethical theories which are typically micro-ethics, Information Ethics is macro-ethics. Instead of being exclusively interested in individual subjects, it is rather focused on the level of social systems and their interplay with lower organizational levels.

Moral judgments vitally depend on the information about what is the case and what is understood as the desirable state of affairs. Moral responsibility increases for an agent who gets progressively more informed. Information streams in the Infosphere can both enrich and pollute the informational environment.

As a macroethics, IE can help us see general patterns and processes and understand their workings. That understanding of mechanisms will hopefully improve our skills in understanding the dangers and the benefits of ICT-enhanced societies.

INFORMATION COMES IN DIFFERENT TYPES, NOT ALL CAN BE CHARACTERIZED AS TRUE/FALSE

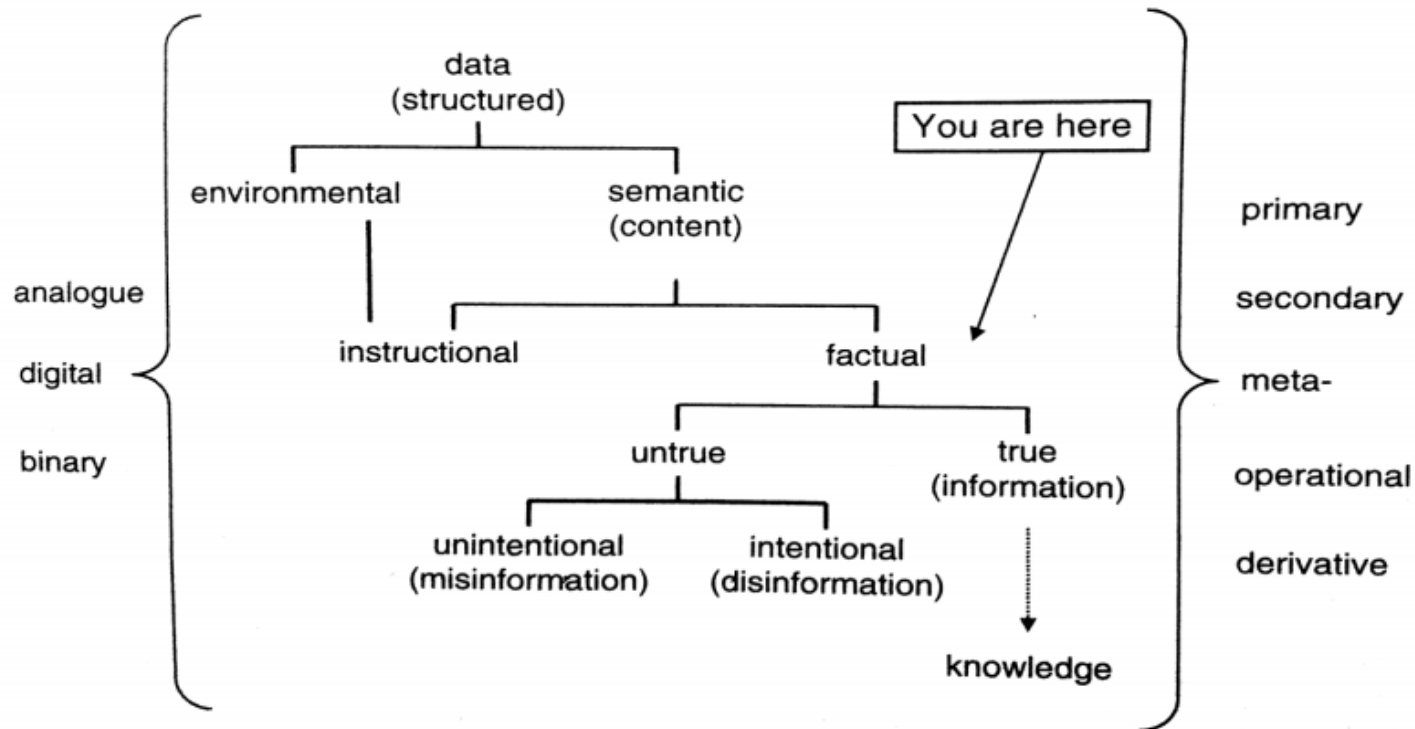
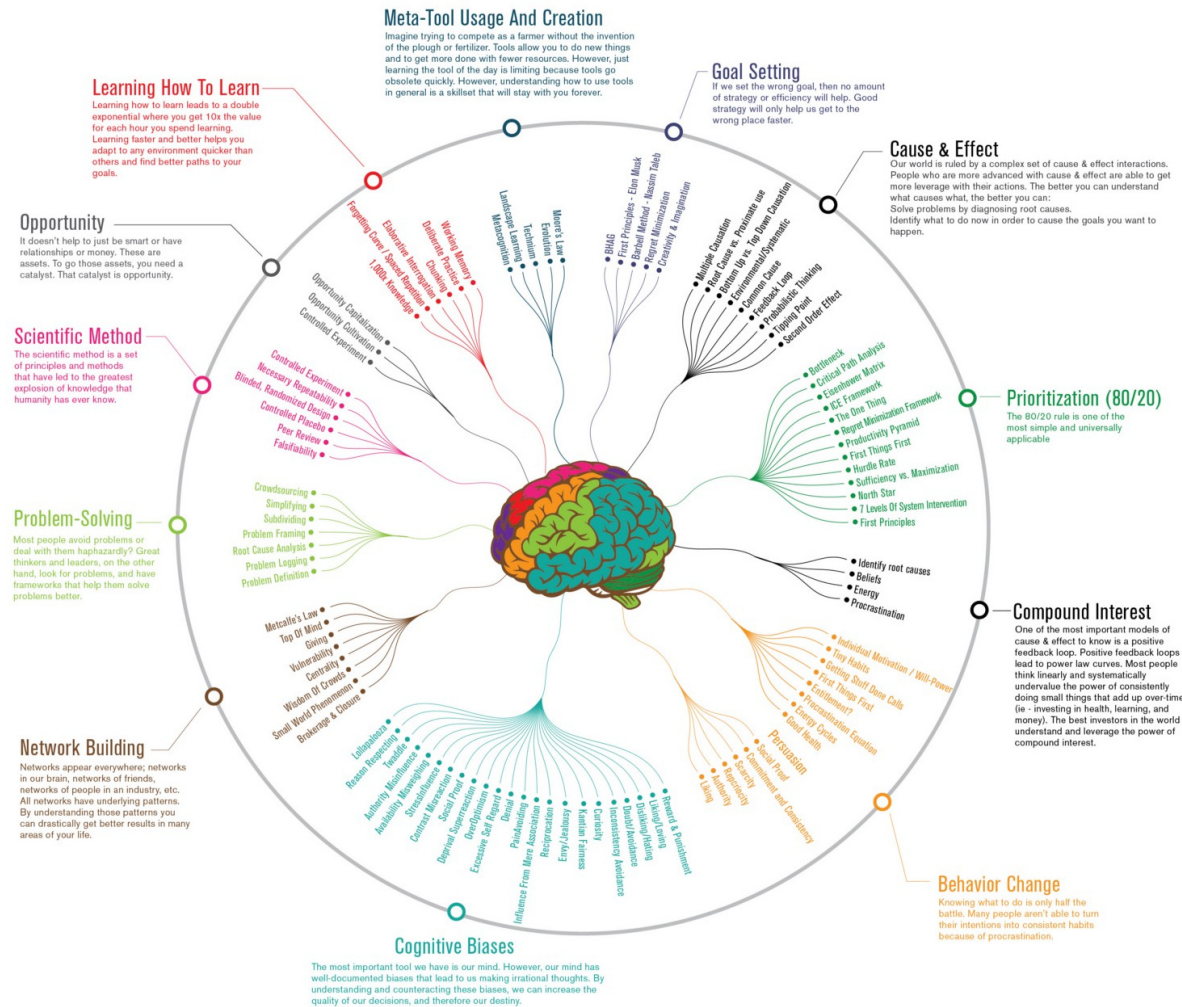


Figure 1. Map of information concepts

Source: Floridi (2010: 49)

COGNITIVELY, WE ALL HAVE BIASES
IN SEARCH FOR INTERSUBJECTIVE



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Boundaries of Disinformation

WHO DECIDES WHAT IS "THE CASE"? ("THE FACT"/"TRUTH")

WHAT IS "AUTORITATIVE INFORMATION"?

WHO ARE AUTHORITIES AND FOR WHAT?

THE NEED FOR BOUNDARY/BALANCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL
FREEDOM AND SOCIETAL INSTITUTIONALIZED THINKING

AUTHORITY VS. FREEDOM

MOVING TOWARDS MORE TRUTH-BASED SOCIETY IS ABOUT
NOT ONLY HOW (AI, MEDIA LITERACY, ETC)

BUT ALSO WHY (PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS, LAW, CRITICAL THINKING,
ETC) WHICH IS A QUESTION FOR DEMOCRACIES TO DECIDE*.

*In sciences we have a related question of SCIENCE vs.
PSEUDOSCIENCE

EXTRA MATERIALS

People have already addressed this question



INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON


A complex network graph with numerous blue and orange nodes connected by thin lines, forming a dense web of connections.

CNetS

Center for Complex Networks and Systems Research



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

A hand holding a smartphone, with a white network graph overlaying the image. The graph consists of white nodes and lines on a dark background.

LET'S
EXPOSE
THE **TRUTH**



<https://cyber.harvard.edu/publications>

BERKMAN KLEIN CENTER

FOR INTERNET & SOCIETY
AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Publications

Polarization and the Pandemic: American Political Discourse

Tracking political discourse in the U.S. for March, April, and May of 2020

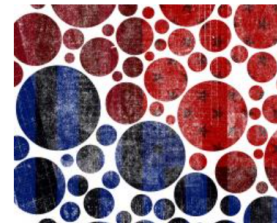
OCT 29, 2020



Partisanship, Impeachment, and the Democratic Primaries: American Political Discourse

Tracking political discourse in the U.S. for January and February of 2020

OCT 22, 2020



US Elections Disinformation Tabletop Exercise Package

Publication provides the intelligence community, social media companies, state election officials, and news media a resource to plan for the election.

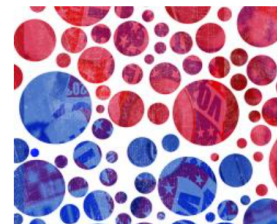
OCT 6, 2020



Mail-In Voter Fraud: Anatomy of a Disinformation Campaign

Working paper explores disinformation campaign about mail-in voter fraud

OCT 1, 2020



DISINFORMATION-CONCEPT MAP



Dr. David Chr. Jaklin

https://miro.medium.com/max/1400/1*SOHWncs_nBZN0Ui1qdm3uA.jpeg

<https://medium.com/@david.jaklin/disinformation-and-covid-19-the-case-of-austria-5440094a789c>

DISINFORMATION-CONCEPT MAP

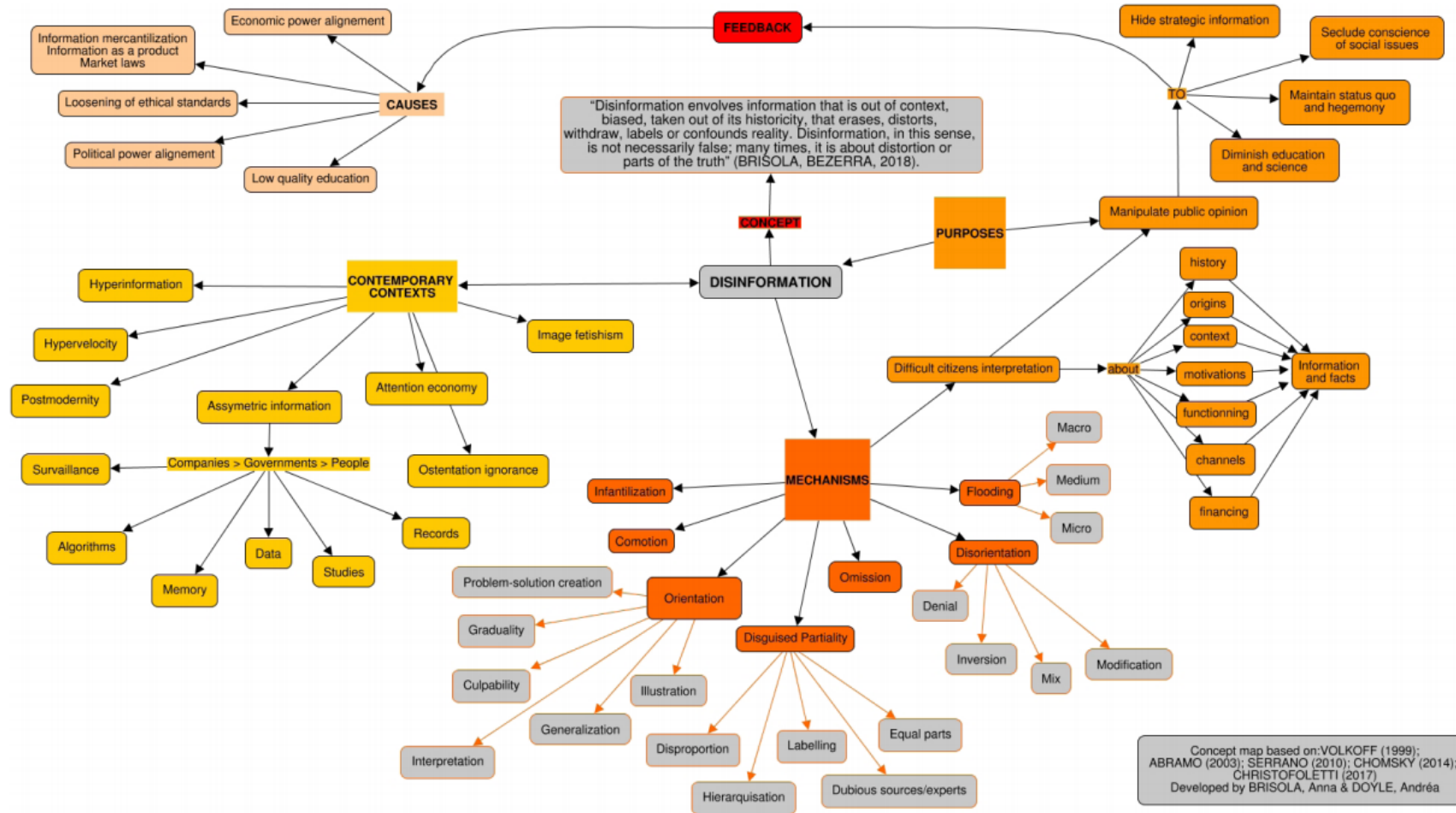


Figure 1. Disinformation concept map