



NORDIS



Context Matters

Exploring the Multidimensional Challenges of Nordic Fact-Checkers

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NORDMEDIA23 - August 16, 2023

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Mapping the actors

Newsroom model & digital information literacy

Ethical values of journalism (national ethical codes) and fact-checking (transparency)



FAKTISK (NO)

2017

Partnership between six news media organisations

TJEKDET (DK)

2016 (Mandag Morgen)

Logically (SE, DK, FI)

UK Based



FAKTABAARI (FI)

2014

AFP FAKTANTARKISTUS (FI)

2017

Original content + AFP

KÄLLKRITIKBYRÅN (SE)

2019

Following the closing of Metro

AFP FAKTAKOLL (SE)

Original content + AFP



Focus on the 4 NORDIS members

- 14 semi-structured interviews (including editors) (as part of the Nordic fact-checkers user needs project) + 4 semi-structured interviews on the Russian-Ukrainian war
- Average duration: 63 minutes / 30 minutes (war)
- Transcription + analysis with Taguette (Open Source QDA)
- Scope: identify issues, resources and tools
- Interdisciplinary theoretical framework: Journalism Studies, User-Oriented Design / HCI, Science and Technologies Studies (STS)



User story 1. Lisa, experienced fact-checker

- Highly experienced journalist (10 years of fact-checking)
- Source: comments on news and social media
- Time-consuming activities, a tool could help her
- Looking for archives published on the web
- Most important tool: her phone
- She found OSINT boring for image verification
- Works in a small team, national/local topics privileged



User story 2. Tore, journalist and developer

- Python, SQL, basic HTML, JavaScript
(stand-alone projects, web scraping)
- Often asked to test new technologies
(but has seen little with added-value)
- AI/Automation: useful for scoring and assessing
(might emerge in the future)
- Hardest stuff to automate = human judgement
(newsworthiness, to decide if it's a joke...)
- Disappointed with Russian deepfakes
(thought they would have done better)



User story 3. Martin, newsroom manager

- Critical skills: understanding society + how to use social media
- Fundings: Facebook Third-Party Fact-checking Network (analysing claims posted by users), Google (media literacy campaign) + public fundings (as in Denmark) and media industry (as in Norway)
- Critics: Facebook too opaque (users' flags, unsupervised machine learning, black box selection algorithm) + Fact-checkers not allowed to verify political claims/advertisements
- Use of Crowd Tangle (service closed) but prefer Storyboard (Nordic) to find problematic content



User story 4. Jane, fact-checker

- Monitoring: CrowdTangle (Facebook), Tweetdeck (Twitter)
- Published 20 fact-checks/years
- Works on media literacy campaigns
(limited impact of fact-checkers but attract more attention with media literacy)
- More interested in the quality or the influence of fact-checks
(contributing to public debate)
- Strategic silence
(not to provide visibility to certain actors)
- Needs to know more about propaganda (young generation)
(discourses, methods)



1. The Resources Challenge

- Limited human resources
- Working in small or micro-organisations implies editorial choices
- Time-consuming tasks: monitoring social media, verifying claims (depending on the format and nature of the fact to check), writing (high level of explanation, staying stuck to the structure), answering readers
- Frustration : everything can't be fact-checked, no answers to everything + it is impossible to fact-check opinions

Due to quite low resources, we're not able to do constant monitoring. So, we try to concentrate on influential cases that are important for public discussion. (Finland)



2. The Tools Challenge

- Need for benefiting from appropriate tools that consider the Nordic languages and the specificities of Nordic contexts
- AI/Automation as an enabler rather than a complete solution (means, not ends)
- AI systems are also used to generate information disorders, which is a concern in terms of detection
- Need for trusting the tools and the results they provide = explicability
- Accuracy of the tools + considering the context (facts are context-dependent)
- Need time to discover tools (sometimes need for skills to master them)
- Need for understanding how machine learning works
- Fact-checking does not equal a sum of tasks and requires a human touch

We don't have that many automatic tools because of our resource issues. (Finland)

I love my job. Don't make too much automated. (Denmark)



3. The Challenge of Impact

- Impact difficult to measure (followers and comments on social media, disinformation might happen in comments)
- Interactions: time-consuming and appreciated (tips from readers)
- Need for providing a high level of explainability in the fact-checks

Sometimes, when we do more visible things that more people have seen, then we get a wave of tips. Like people discover you, and they're like, "Can you check this?".
(Sweden)

- Image of the fact-checker / people sometimes disagree / critics / harassment
Often fact-checkers are being accused of being judges or being the Ministry of truth or whatever. No, it's not that at all. It's just another way of writing stories, telling stories, important stories that are constructive. (Norway)



Use Case: Fact-Checking the Russian-Ukrainian War



Different levels but common patterns

- Distance + language do not allow a full understandability
- Unreliable sources (both sides)
- Can take longer to fact-check
- Blurred images are the most challenging + biggest challenge: AI generated content
- Exposure to violent content (audio-visual), a rating system from 0 to 5 (in Norway), most violent on Telegram
- Propaganda on both sides, but cannot be compared (soft vs hard)
- Need for tools to monitor disinformation in the Russian-speaking population in the country (in Finland)
- Could fact-check more but lack of human resources (micro-structures, other priorities)
- Need for collaborations between fact-checkers (value added) but not always time to do so

Challenges are resource and context-dependent

From information gathering to publishing fact-checks, the challenges faced by the Nordic fact-checkers are multifaceted and happen upstream and downstream of their fact-checking process.

They depend on the resources (human and time), the human part of the work that cannot be automated, and the new threats posed by machine-generated content (detection, verification).

Openness to audiences is also challenged by adverse reactions.





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Thank you!

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