Problem of hate speech on the internet

Problem of hate speech on social media

Since one of the positive advantages of the internet being free without censorship, all removals were typically made without comment and the exact removal criteria were kept secret. Nevertheless, it was already evident to social media moderators in the early years of social media that anyone who enables misanthropic contributions to be made accessible publicly changes the direction of public discourse. Moderators of social media exclude individuals who are physically insulted on the internet because they withdraw from conversations and thus are no longer included in the brave new world of the internet, allegedly open to everyone. Naturally, in the digital world, democratic principles and norms should apply as well.

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- Freedom of speech is highly respected in democratic countries, so racist or misanthropic statements can be stated, despite the chatter in right-wing internet spheres, without the author being subject to prosecution. Nevertheless, these postings, referred to in research as 'dangerous speech', require a response to prevent them from developing their toxic effect. Ideally, these responses should not only be provided by the state, but also by other stakeholders: users of civil society, media, organisations and social media platforms. However it is not particularly well prepared for this by civil society as a whole.

- When Facebook first started in 2008, there were operating persons who made opposing policy to hate speech. On-line registries for extremist profiles? These do not generally lead, on further thought, to democratic dialogue and behaviour. Monitoring of extremist activities via Facebook pages? This proved to be a good strategy for raising awareness. In this phase, there are many growth opportunities

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Although the relevant players had previously behaved without public knowledge inside closed groups or on little-known websites, now they are crowding with their racist and anti-refugee posts on Facebook pages and in groups. Therefore, they became a prominent and serious problem: for democratic discourse on the one hand, which increasingly shifted to the extreme right and promoted the normalization of misanthropic positions on the other.

Extremist and propaganda

- Wherever people receive knowledge and interact, extremists try to be present. As a result, the digital media ecosystems playing an increasingly important role in spreading extremist propaganda over the past few years. In order to optimize their circulation and efficacy, extremists increasing concentration on optimally interlinking their online networking strategies with their offline activities. In particular, extremism in its violent form and terrorism can be described as a type of bloody political theatre in which violence is a means of a (political) end.

- The favored political strategies in the toolbox of extremists who wish to overcome the free democratic order are escalation, polarization and fueling distrust of neighbors. Fear and hate are aimed at dividing society and provoking over-reaction from governments. Extremism thus works (at least at a strategic level) only because it has an audience, which reacts in an extreme way itself. Therefore, the reaction of the media, state and community to terrorist violence has an escalating or de-escalating impact. This either plays into the hands of terrorists (unconsciously), or frustrates in their plan. Propaganda, from an operative point of view, of which hate speech also forms an integral part in the process of denigration of others (out-groups), has two functions for extremists. Motivate and inspire their supporters (in groups). Therefore, extremist propaganda can be described as a mobilization tool.

Essential components of hate speech propaganda

- Victimhood narratives ("we are under attack!")

- Redemption scenarios ("only dictatorial state, workers' state can protect us!")

- Fulfilling individuals' desire to gain significance ("Be a hero, a mother of the nation, a builder!").

In order to determine a binding ideology, extremism needs an ideology focused on narratives. The same goes for the disparity between extremist right-wing organisations and apolitical criminals. The legitimization of their actions, especially violence, is based on a specific ideology. This selected 'reality' acts as an interpretative structure for events and topics to be classified. There is no extremism or terrorism without ideology.

Essential components of hate speech propaganda

- To some extent, the internet, and social media, are defined as a deciding factor or at least as catalysts for the process of radicalization. However, the extent of the direct influence of propaganda on people can only be determined in individual cases. It is also debated whether propaganda can cause extreme views and behavior, or whether it only strengthens established attitudes or beliefs. There is cause for concern about the role of online filter bubbles, media content that is pre-sorted by algorithms and the resulting echo chambers as forums for like-minded people.

- Confirmation biases and perceptual frames permanently pre-select data and choose what best fits our current values. In contrast, information that questions our convictions and "truths" (cognitive dissonance) is relativized and devalued. Therefore, components of essentially unknown processes are our biological filters. A great deal happens offline and completely without the help of algorithms from Facebook or Google.

Essential components of hate speech propaganda

Therefore, adults have only limited control over their original core values and identity. It takes a lot of time to make a radical shift to this, a conscious manipulation of ourselves. A personal crisis, probably intense emotional stress, can trigger the motivation for such self-manipulation. Then, as a consequence, we seriously doubt what we previously thought was nice and proper. In the form of 'promises of redemption,' the related desire for new orientation will generate the requisite cognitive opening and make us sensitive to propaganda. Consequently, adolescents, teenagers and young adults whose identities develop as they look for truths and their position in society, whose filter bubble still has not (fully) developed, are potentially more vulnerable to manipulation than older people.

Essential components of hate speech propaganda

If a person already believes in global conspiracies, the probability of believing extremist narratives increases as well. These have additional emotional value when compared with beliefs in an ideology, in particular an extremist one. Conspiracy theorists consider themselves to be the few "people who can see", elite in-groups who knows the truth. This is correlated with a rise in self-value, which automatically leads to devaluation of the "blind and stupid" out-group.