

Local solutions to global problems: strategies to fight misinformation



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Description and core topics

Disinformation is presented as a global problem but has substantially different manifestations at the regional and local levels. Studies emphasize that understanding disinformation requires contextualizing it within the social, political, and historical environments in which it circulates and addressing it in a multidisciplinary manner (Storey-Nagy, 2022; Arecharet et al., 2023). Similarly, strategies to combat informational disorders will only be successful if they can trace the axis of coordinates in which their target audience is situated.

Case studies have delved into the production of disinformation in close settings, shedding light on the motivations and practices of actors involved in the creation of fake news, emphasizing the need for a holistic social critique and local-level interventions (Ong & Cabañes, 2019). In the Portuguese case, this issue is particularly relevant in an environment of growing “news deserts” that has sparked interest in recent years, especially in Europe (Jerónimo et al., 2022; Verza et al., 2024). In Spain, numerous investigations claim that political polarization is the environment in which information, especially related to electoral issues with regional manifestations, has proliferated. This polarization has simultaneously fueled hate speech about immigration (Masip, Suau, & Ruiz-Caballero, 2020; Arcila, Blanco-Herrero & Apolo, 2020; Aparici, García-Marín, & Rincón-Manzano, 2019).

We seek contributions in which disinformation influences political and social dynamics at the local level, including case studies on how fake news affects rural and urban communities. We invite research on the relationship between disinformation and local media, as well as the role of digital platforms and citizens in the propagation of erroneous information in different contexts (Espiritosanto & Dignant, 2021).

The aim is to dissect the problem but, at the same time, to offer responses and action strategies (Belluati & Fubini, 2022). In the Ibero-American context, for example, the importance of fact-checking alliances to combat political disinformation, restore credibility in regional media, and contribute to democratic quality and civic empowerment has been highlighted (Rodríguez-Pérez, Paniagua-Rojano & Magallón-Rosa, 2021). These initiatives have also taken place in Europe with different results depending on the context (Palomo & Sedano, 2021). In a war scenario like Ukraine, on the other hand, there are works that highlight the role of citizen activism in local issues in the fight for truth on social networks (Golovchenko, Hartmann, & Adler-Nissen, 2018).

Local journalists play a crucial role in combating disinformation by identifying false information circulating within communities, cross-referencing sources and scenarios of proximity, and creating a new narrative that includes fact-checking, providing appropriate context based on local references (Fernández-Barrero, Rivas-de-Roca, & Pérez-Curiel, 2024; Jerónimo & Esparza, 2022).

In this special issue, we welcome studies on strategies and policies tailored to local contexts for combating disinformation, including analyses of media literacy initiatives for vulnerable audiences (Martínez-Costa et al., 2023; Sábada, Salaverría & Bringué-Sala, 2023). We value studies that highlight the collaboration between media organizations, local/regional governments, and civil society organizations in addressing this challenge.

We invite authors to share empirical research, theoretical analyses, and practical proposals that shed light on the specificities of disinformation in various locales and offer effective solutions, particularly through new technological developments such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). Social networks and AI have posed a challenge to the Information Society and have catalyzed disinformation, but at the same time, they can provide solutions to combat it. Starting from the regional level, but with the aim of transcending borders and finding common dynamics, comparative studies of different regional environments are especially valued in this special issue as they offer a broad and enriched perspective on how to address this phenomenon (Teruel, 2023; Rebollo-Buena & Pereira, 2023).

Themes

- Local and regional manifestations of disinformation.
- Alliances, civil society initiatives and local/regional politics to fight disinformation.
- Comparative studies on regional/local demonstrations and initiatives.
- Artificial Intelligence and social media as allies against information disorders.
- Vulnerable audiences and media literacy: case studies.
- Solutions against disinformation from the media: self-regulation, ethical codes, and journalistic routines.
- Fact-checking: localized agencies and strategies against disinformation and hate speech.

Keywords:

Disinformation; local context; journalism; social media; audiences; artificial intelligence.

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- They must include (in both Spanish and English), title, abstract (between 150 and 200 words), and a maximum of 5 keywords.
- Each author must provide the following: name and surname, Institutional e-mail address, ORCID code, and a brief CV of approximately 120 words.
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- Headings shall be numbered in Arabic numerals following the standard structure 1., 1.1, 1.1.1, etc.
- Tables and/or figures shall be numbered in Arabic numerals from 1 to infinite, indicating source and authorship.
- Citations shall be presented in the text in Harvard format (e.g.: Bauman, 2010: 126), not in footnotes.
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