Slide 1

Confessions of
a Fake News Scholar

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Slide 2

according to the literature, the notion of fake news is

1. Vague

2. Politically dangerous

3. Undistinguishable from past forms of misinformation

4. Charged with a simplistic idea of journalistic truth

5. Missing key features of it object

5 reasons to stay clear of "fake news"

Slide 3

Tandoc, E.C., Lim, Z.W. & Ling, R. (2017)
Defining 'Fake News'. *Digital Journalism*. 811 pp.1–17

TABLE 1
A typology of fake news definitions

Level of facticity	Author's immediate intention to deceive	
	High	Low
High	Native advertising Propaganda Manipulation	News satire
Low	Fabrication	News parody

1. Vague

Slide 4

	Satire	False Connection	Misleading Content	False Context	Imposter Content	Manipulated Content	Fabricated Content
Poor journalism		✔	✔	✔			
To Parody	✔				✔		✔
To Provoke or to 'punk'					✔	✔	✔
Passion				✔			
Partisanship			✔	✔			
Profit		✔			✔		✔
Political Influence			✔	✔		✔	✔
Propaganda			✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

Wardle, C. Fake news. It's complicated (2017). First Draft (via Medium).
https://medium.com/1st-draft/fake-news-its-complicated-d0f773766c79

1. Vague

Slide 1 (2. Politically dangerous)

Claire, W. & Derakhshan, H. (2017).
Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking (Report to the Council of Europe).

The term "fake news" has also begun to be appropriated by politicians around the world to describe news organisations whose coverage they find disagreeable. In this way, it's becoming a mechanism by which the powerful can clamp down upon, restrict, undermine and circumvent the free press. It's also worth noting that the term and its visual derivatives (e.g., the red 'FAKE' stamp) have been even more widely appropriated by websites, organisations and political figures identified as untrustworthy by fact-checkers to undermine opposing reporting and news organizations" (p.16)
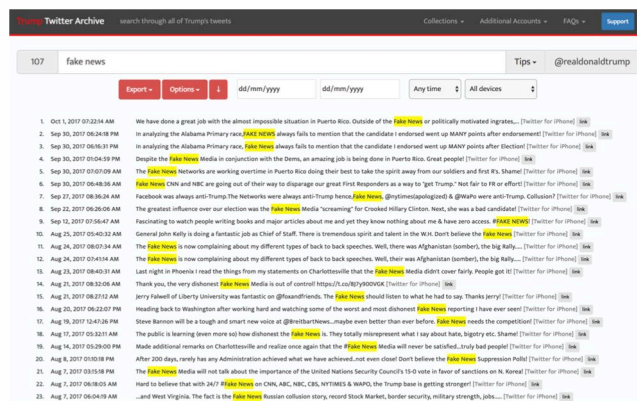
2. Politically dangerous

Slide 2 (2. Politically dangerous)

https://youtu.be/1ZAPwfrtAFY?t=5m40s

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump — The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!
1:48 PM - 17 Feb 2017 — 52,477 Retweets 160,773 Likes

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump — Sorry folks, but if I would have relied on the Fake News of CNN, NBC, ABC, CBS, washpost or nytimes, I would have had ZERO chance winning WH
5:15 AM - 6 Jun 2017 — 26,213 Retweets 106,804 Likes

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump — The Fake News Media works hard at disparaging & demeaning my use of social media because they don't want America to hear the real story!
5:20 PM - 28 May 2017 — 29,621 Retweets 115,034 Likes

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump — The Fake News Media hates when I use what has turned out to be my very powerful Social Media - over 100 million people! I can go around them
5:23 AM - 16 Jun 2017 — 28,709 Retweets 133,679 Likes

2. Politically dangerous

Slide 3 (2. Politically dangerous)

http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/archive/fake%20news/ttff

2. Politically dangerous

Slide 4 (3. Undistinguishable from past misinformation)

THE WORLD — MAINE EXPLOSION CAUSED BY BOMB OR TORPEDO?

3. Undistinguishable from past misinformation

Slide 4

Tuchman, G. (1978). Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality. New York: The Free Press.

Schudson, M. (1989). The sociology of news production. *Media, Culture & Society*. 11 (3). pp. 263–282

Making News

A Study in the Construction of Reality

GAYE TUCHMAN

Social scientists who study the news speak a language that journalists mistrust and misunderstand. They speak of 'constructing the news', of 'making news', of the 'social construction of reality'. 'News is what newspapermen make it' (Gieber, 1964: 173). 'News is the result of the methods newsworkers employ' (Fishman, 1980: 14). News is 'manufactured by journalists' (Cohen and Young, 1973: 97). Even journalists who are critical of the daily practices of their colleagues and their own organizations find this talk offensive. I have been at several conferences of journalists and social scientists where such language promptly pushed the journalists into a fierce defence of their work, on the familiar ground that they just report the world as they see it, the facts, facts, and nothing but the facts, and yes, there's occasional bias, occasional sensationalism, occasional inaccuracy, but a responsible journalist never, never, never fakes the news.

That's not what we said, the hurt scholars respond. We didn't say journalists *fake* the news, we said journalists *make* the news:

To say that a news report is a story, no more, but no less, is not to demean the news, not to accuse it of being fictitious. Rather, it alerts us that news, like all public documents, is a constructed reality possessing its own internal validity. (Tuchman, 1976: 97)

4. Charged with a simplistic idea of journalistic truth

Slide 5

Bounegru, L., Abildgaard, M.S., Birkbak, A., Gray, J., Jacomy, M., Elgaard, T.J., Koed Madsen, A. & Munk, A.K. (2017). Five Provocations about Fake News. *STS Encounters*. Forthcoming.

While fact-checkers… would define fake news as false, misleading or else unverifiable information packaged as news, fake news might do entirely different work for users who share it on Facebook.

This might include
- acting as monetisable clickbait for viral content pages,
- doing issue work for grassroots activist groups,
- grassroots campaigning work for political loyalists
- and providing humour for entertainment groups

5. Missing key features of its object

Slide 6

?

What is "fake news" about if it is not about fakeness?

Slide 7

https://sputniknews.com/analysis/201702041050340451-macron-us-agent-dhuicq/

SPUTNIK

Ex-French Economy Minister Macron Could Be 'US Agent' Lobbying Banks' Interests

© AFP 2017/ ERIC PIERMONT

Controversial details regarding French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron's personal and professional life as a banker and reforms that he carried out as the minister of economy hint at the fact that he could be acting in the interests of the US financial market in France, Republicans party lawmaker Nicolas Dhuicq said.

"Concerning his private life, it is becoming public as we speak… Macron is a guy who is called a chouchou, or a darling, of the French media, which is owned by only a few people, as we all know. Besides, one of the guys who backs him is famous businessman Pierre Berge, a business partner and long-time lover of Yves Saint Laurent, who is openly homosexual and advocates gay marriage. There is very wealthy gay lobby behind him. This says it all," Dhuicq said.

"Macron is gay" hoax

AUTOMATING THE VISUALIZATION PROCESS WITH A SCRIPT (THE SLIME SLICER)

april16   may16   june16   july16   august16   september16

october16   november16   december16   january17   february17   march17

FAKE NEWS SPRINT - AMSTERDAM MARCH 2017 *HOW FAKE NEWS TRAVEL ONLINE?*

Harmful news bloom

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https://fr.sputniknews.com/france/201702171030136506-macron-rumeurs-medias/

D'où les rumeurs sur Macron proviennent-elles en réalité?

FRANCE 17:34 17.02.2017 (mis à jour 17:56 17.02.2017)

Le candidat à la présidentielle Emmanuel Macron s'attaque déjà en personne à Sputnik pour la propagation de rumeurs que le site n'a jamais diffusées. Rejetant fermement toute accusation, Sputnik invite à creuser plus profond dans les origines de ces rumeurs. Oh surprise! Le sujet s'avère avoir été soulevé il y a déjà fort longtemps.

''Macron is gay'' hoax

YOU CALL THIS NEWS?! THIS ISN'T INFORMATIVE!

THIS IS A SOUND BITE! THIS IS ENTERTAINMENT! THIS IS SENSATIONALISM!

FORTUNATELY, THAT'S ALL I HAVE THE PATIENCE FOR.

The contradiction
of ''fake news'' research

Public
Data
Lab

publicdatalab.org

The Public Data Lab seeks to facilitate research, democratic engagement and public debate around the future of the data society.

We want to develop and disseminate innovative research, teaching, design and participation formats for the creation and use of public data.

We work in collaboration with an interdisciplinary network of researchers, practitioners, journalists, civil society groups, designers, developers and public institutions across the world.

Our approach characterized by an interest in:

- **Intervention** around social, political, economic and ecological issues;
- **Participation** through involving different publics in the co-design of our work;
- **Artisanship** in advancing the craft of developing data projects and experiences;
- **Openness** in sharing our research, data and code for all to use.

Venturini, T., Munk, A., & Meunier, A. (2018).
Data-Sprint: a Public Approach to Digital Research.
In Lury et al. (Eds.), Interdisciplinary Research Methods

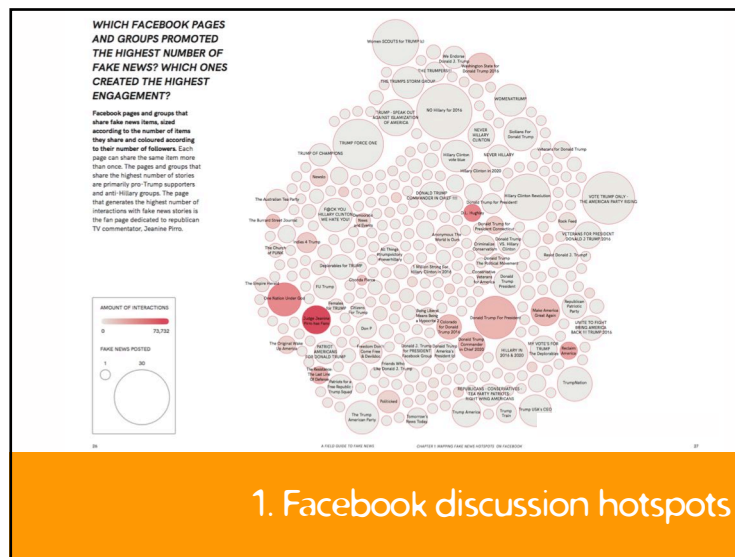Data sprints and the Public Data Lab

Slide 1:

Bounegru, L., Gray, J., Venturini, T., & Mauri, M. (2018). A Field Guide to Fake News and other Information Disorders.

1. Investigating the functions performed by 'fake stories' on Facebook
2. Tracing how viral information circulates through crediting and discrediting actions
3. Looking at trackers employed by different news websites monetize their audience
4. Investigating how 'fake stories' are circulated as memetic images
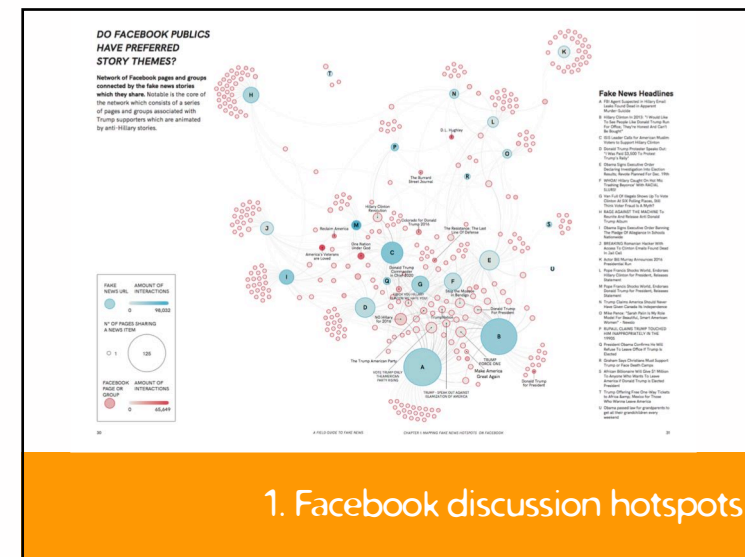5. Studying how 'fake stories' are used in the context of online trolling

fakenews.publicdatalab.org

5 lines of media inquiry

Slide 2:
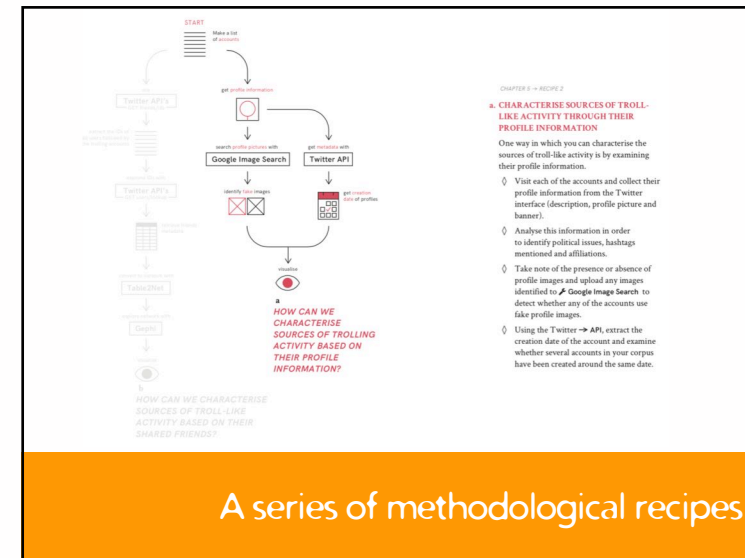
A series of methodological recipes
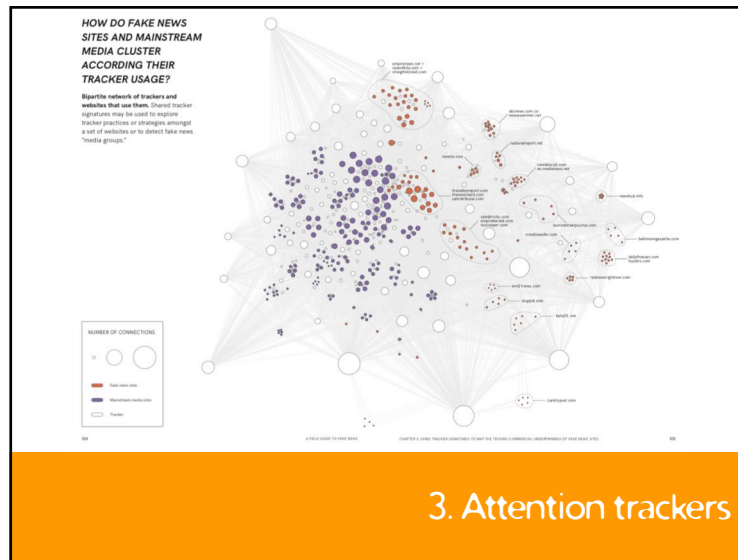
Slide 3:

1. Facebook discussion hotspots

Slide 4:

1. Facebook discussion hotspots
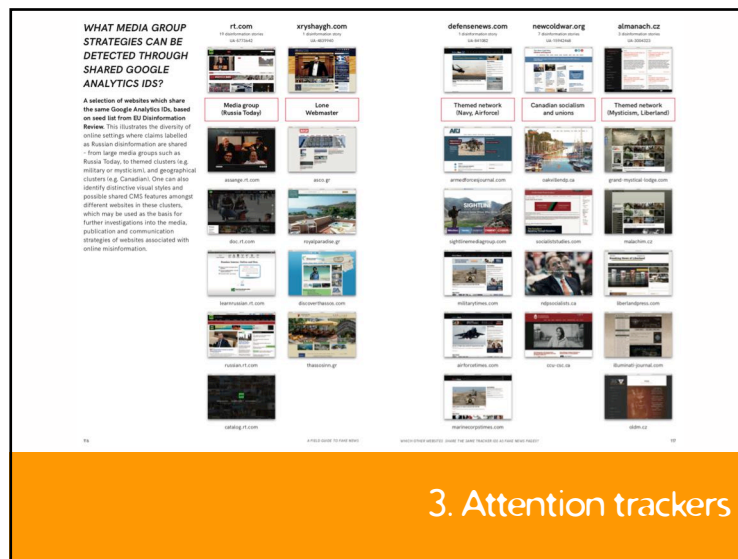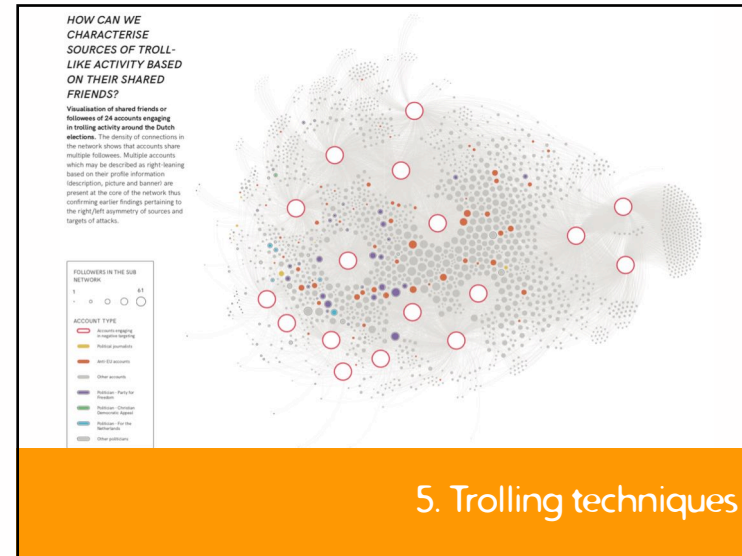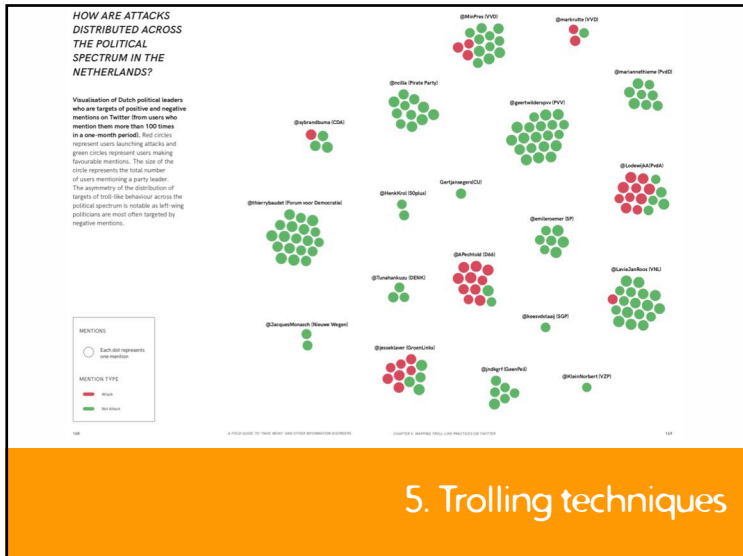
1. Facebook discussion hotspots

2. News circulation

2. News circulation

3. Attention trackers
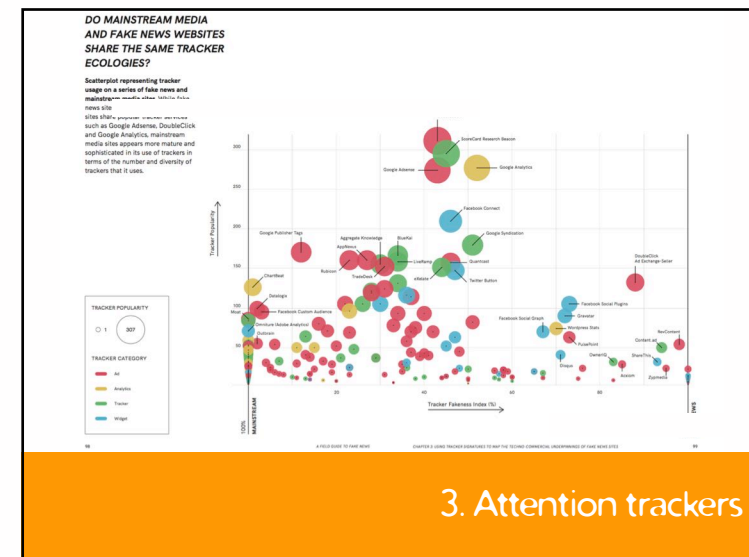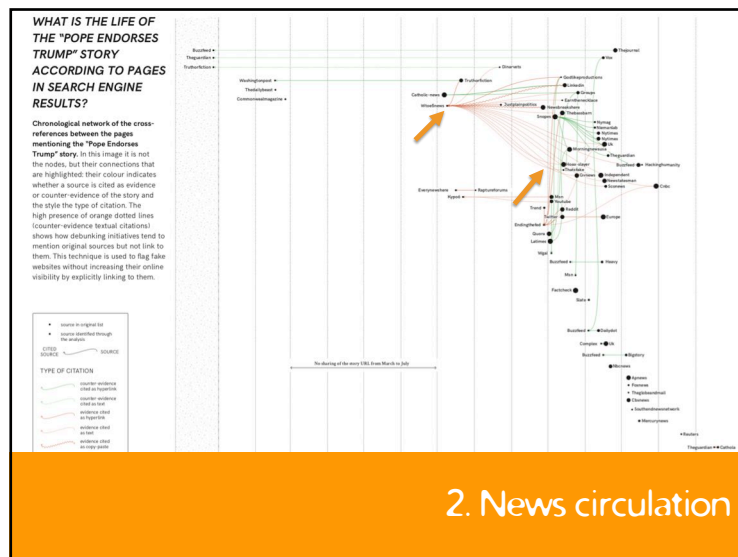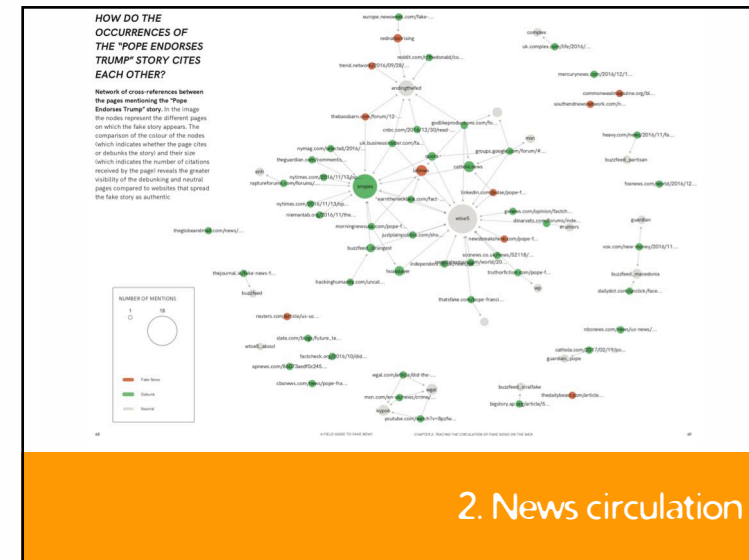
3. Attention trackers
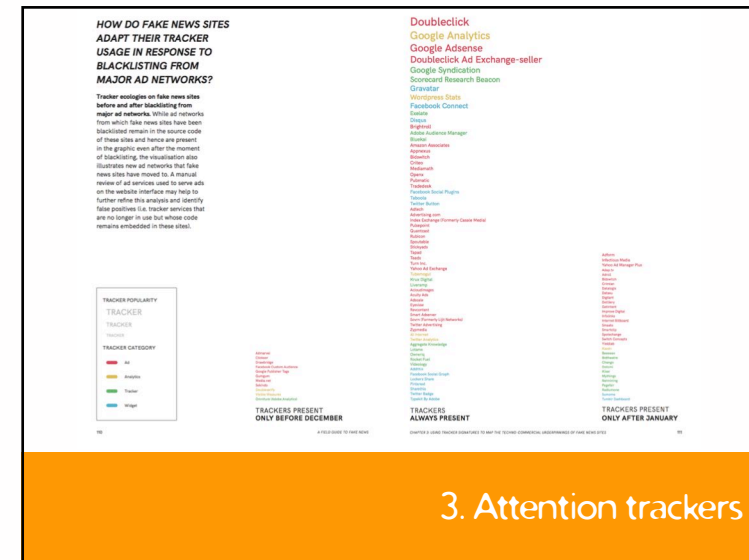
3. Attention trackers

3. Attention trackers

4. Memetic images

4. Memetic images

4. Memetic images

5. Trolling techniques

5. Trolling techniques

Slide 1

5. Trolling techniques

Slide 2

model organism of genetic mapping

+ Small dimension

+ Simple and easy to identify morphological features

+ Large geographical spread

+ Short generation time

+ High fecundity and elevated mutation rate
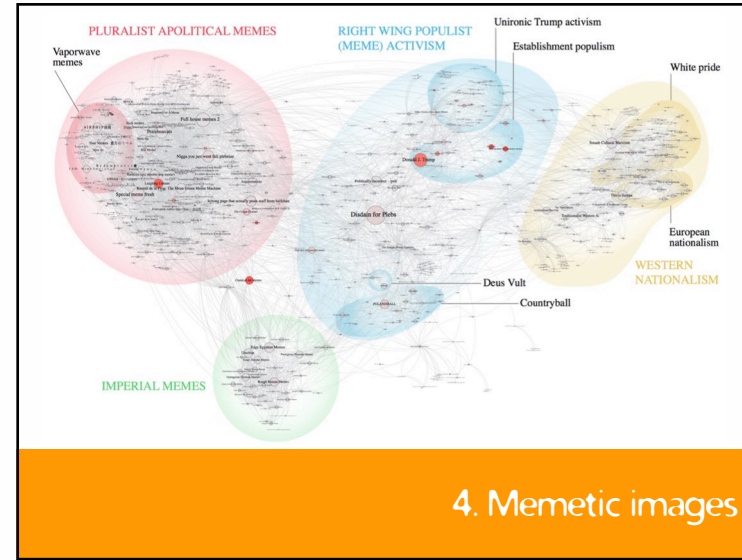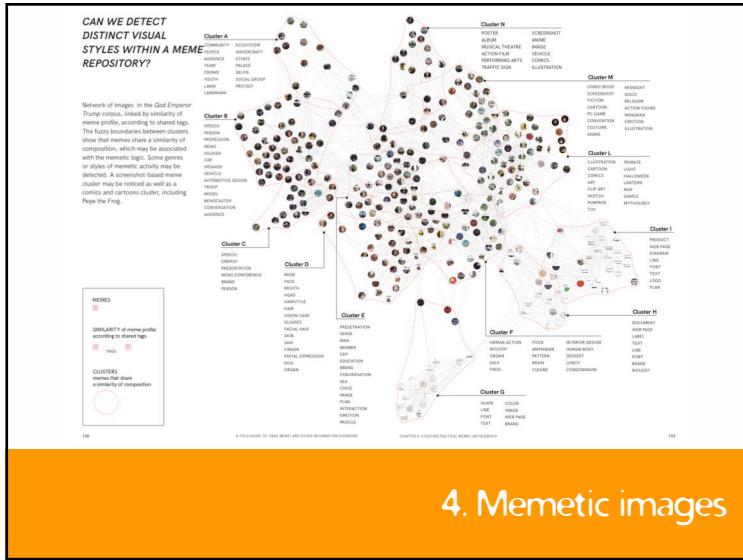
the amazing drosophila melanogaster

Slide 3

+ Small dimension
  fake stories ten to be 'flatter' than ordinary news story

+ Simple and easy to identify morphology
  fake news exaggeration makes it easier to follow them

+ Large geographical spread
  fake news examples can be found in most countries and sectors

+ Short generation time
  fake news rise and fall in weeks and often of in days

+ High fecundity and elevated mutation rate
  fake news do not only spread but also mutate rapidly

Fake news as the drosophila of media studies

Slide 4

Thank you!

tommasoventurini.it

+ Venturini, T. (2018). Sur l'étude des sujets populaires ou les confessions d'un spécialiste des fausses nouvelles. In P. Trudel (Ed.), *Les fausses nouvelles*. Presses de l'Université Laval.

+ Venturini, T., Bounegru, L., Gray, J., & Rogers, R. (2018). A reality check(list) for digital methods. *New Media & Society*

+ Venturini, T., Jacomy, M., Meunier, A., & Latour, B. (2017). An unexpected journey: A few lessons from sciences Po médialab's experience. *Big Data & Society*, 4(2)