Call for participation

An Interdisciplinary Workshop on Misinformation in Social Networks
Fribourg, Nov 26-27, 2019

We bring together researchers from various strands of literature for a stimulating exchange across disciplines. The workshop is dedicated to the spread of misinformation in social networks and to potential counter-measures.

- Date: Tuesday, Nov 26th (1pm) – Wednesday, Nov 27th (lunchtime).

- Location: "Pavillon Vert" in the Botanic Garden (the orange house directly next to the Natural History Museum, Chemin du Musée 6) 1700 Fribourg, Switzerland.

- Speakers: Francis Bloch (Paris School of Economics), Guido Caldarelli (IMT Lucca), Giacomo Livan (University College London), Walter Quattrociocchi (Ca'Foscari University of Venice), Nicole Tabasso (University of Surrey), Marco Schwarz (University of Innsbruck).

- Social Dinner: Nov 26th, in the old town of Fribourg.

- Registration: Necessary before Sept 26th, 2019. Link. See details below.

- We are looking forward to active exchange and inspiring discussions with you!

Motivation. Digitalization has changed the way people produce, perceive, and spread information. It has, however, not eliminated misinformation such as unwarranted rumors, conspiracy theories, and false information, which all seem to flourish in online social networks. The current public debate about "fake news" and "alternative facts" is only an indication of the importance of the topic, whose actual relevance is a consequence of misinformation eventually leading to suboptimal decisions making both on the individual level (e.g. concerning vaccination) and the collective level (e.g. in an election).

Literature. An empirical literature on misinformation documents that false information, rumors and conspiracy theories are transmitted in social networks (e.g. Del Vicario *et al.*, 2016; Vosoughi *et al.*, 2018). This literature suggests that the structure of the social network strongly affects its diffusion (see also Doerr *et al.*, 2012). In particular, computer scientists and physicists have analyzed network data and compared them with models of information diffusion in social networks (e.g. Sikder *et al.*, 2018). Complementary to these contributions, economists have studied theoretical models that incorporate incentives into information transmission or so-called social learning (e.g. Acemoglu *et al.*, 2010). In particular, Bloch *et al.* (2018) have analyzed rumor spreading among rational agents who are interested in finding the truth; Merlino and Tabasso (2018) study persistence of rumors when there is a costly truth checking option, and Azzimonti and Fernandes (2018) study the effect of social media on polarization.

Format. We propose a handful of presentations, all by invited speakers, and some rounds of informal discussions. Potential topics will include: echo chamber effects, biased agents (trolls, bots), counter-measures, patterns of diffusion, speed of diffusion, segregation, comparison between scientific and hoax information, experiments, sophisticated versus naïve agents, filtering, debunking. Presentations will give overviews, focus on single papers, or address work in progress. They may report theoretical, empirical, and also simulation studies.

Location. We meet in picturesque Fribourg, a university town in Switzerland, right at the French-German language border. The workshop will start in the early afternoon and include a social dinner and finish the next day around lunchtime.

Registration and Fee. Please register before September 26th following this LINK. The workshop fee is CHF 150.- ($\approx$ USD 150.-) covering access to the workshop, catering during the workshop, and the social dinner. Registration is only complete when we have received the registration fee on the account given at the end of the registration form. For administrative questions you can contact Andrea.Sommer-Gauch@unifr.ch.

References.

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