Social Media Monopoly, Hate Speech and Cultural Wars

Guy Berger, independent media and internet policy consultant

Hateful content on Telegram can travel from and to aspirant political actors and activists, be intensified on platforms like Parler, and appear in YouTube comments, Tiktok posts and the formation of closed groups on Facebook, as well as gain a toehold in news media reporting. This is an ecosystem of hatred.

It can develop online scale and offline impact due to four factors: (1) active and organised groups of hate-mongers, (2) financial returns to these actors and sometimes – through advertising – to the platforms themselves, (3) the use of coded words and memes to "dog whistle" their attacks and (4) giant platforms' (such as YouTube, Facebook) algorithmic amplification of such emotive content.

In addressing the problems, there are currently mixed roles being played by the service providers themselves, other levels in the tech stack, legal actors, and civil society and media. More is needed.

Hate speech exploits individuals› interests in identifying what is causing their problems. It makes scapegoats of particular groups of people. Besides for countering such online scapegoating, media can help people correctly identify the more fundamental causes underpinning their grievances. That means that journalists can empower people to recognise that a hate campaign offers a false ride rather than a real solution – and that it gravely violates the rights of fellow humans.