

2022 **MANIFESTO**



DROG.
Solved:
DEFINING DISINFO

The decade

Not only has the topic of disinformation reemerged since the 1960's, in the past decade it has brought to life an entire ecosystem of research and countermeasures. Spending millions of dollars for a greater cause.

But how do we know what is effective, what makes sense, what is counterproductive, and - most essentially - **what problem is actually addressed?**

Over the decade there have been world-events that severely altered the way we intervene, perceive truth and safeguard freedom of speech. Just to name a few. Because:

**Disinformation adapts. Consequences evolve. Paradigms shift.
Next-generation interventions emerge.**

MH17

January 6th

Conspiracies

Crimea

2016 US Elections

COVID

ISIS

Cambridge
Analytica

Radicalisation

“Donors note the need for continuous research to **keep up with the trends of disinformation** and the importance of linking this research with policy to ensure it is **useful and impactful.**”

The Many Faces Fighting Disinformation: supporting Europe’s counter-disinformation community,
December 2021, EU Disinfo Lab

DROG Disinformation Intervention Model

To understand the progress in the field of counter-disinformation, we have classified several generations in what we call the DROG Disinformation Intervention Model (DROG DIM).

Many current interventions tackling disinformation are national in scope and ideological in essence, that is: without scientific underpinning, clearly defined goals, or cost-effectiveness studies backing up their efforts. They typically propose only one of the intervention types that are outlined in the DIM-model. In essence, they claim: "the disinformation problem goes away if you give us more money". Their silver bullets often aim at the supposed gullibility of the masses and the supposed identical patterns that underlie all disinformation campaigns. But there are no silver bullets.

The model identifies 5 different generations of interventions, based on paradigm shifts that have appeared in the past decade.



GEN 1 – 2014

StratCom

GEN 1

2014

Interventions:

- Coordinated StratCom
- Building Networks
- Support Independent Journalism
- Think Tank Reports
- News Literacy (informational)
- OSINT

What happened	Hybrid Warfare
Problem paradigm	Foreign interference
Deficit model	Communication
Focus on	Awareness

Strategic Communication

Citizens need access to proper information and new skills to distinguish false narratives from true narratives.

"If only the busy masses had more access to proper information the world would be a better place."

Solution: information campaigns + supporting journalism

Countering foreign interference and ISIS recruitment efforts by fighting like with like. Engaging NGOs and civil society as the first line of defence against propaganda. Their efforts are supported by military intelligence.

Specialist, academic and policy-maker insights need to spread to a wider audience. Training for people with functions sensitive to foreign interference and general awareness-raising campaigns are important. Media and digital literacy education is crucial to empower citizens to better interpret and evaluate the information they encounter.

GEN 2 – 2016

What happened	Election Interference
Problem paradigm	Truth Decay
Deficit model	Information
Focus on	Facts and Narratives

Debunking

GEN 2

2016

Interventions:

- Topical rebuttal
- Fact checking
- Labeling of information
- Expansion of 3rd party fact checking
- EU High Level Expert Group
- EDMO

Debunking narratives

Once everyone has access to the relevant facts constructive debates become possible because polarization disappears.

"If only journalists could expose and debunk non-facts and present proper facts instead the world would be a better place."

Solution: fact-checking

As an answer to the rise of so-called Big Disinfo, an amalgam of data-scientists and journalists check facts that made it into public discourse. Professionals help individuals navigate the information jungle.

Once everybody agrees on the relevant facts as a pre-political baseline there will be a groundwork for an effective debate in which all can express their opinions and convictions.

The bottom line is summarized by US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who once told an obdurate opponent, "You are entitled to your own opinion, but you are not entitled to your own facts."

GEN 3 – 2018

Prebunking

GEN 3

2018

Interventions:

- Technique Rebuttal
- Applied Psychological Inoculation
- CIB Detection and Monitoring
- Individual Media Literacy (psychological)

What happened	End of Status Quo
Problem paradigm	Manipulation Vulnerability
Deficit model	Rationality
Focus on	Techniques and Tactics

Prebunking tactics

By letting potential receivers experience how disinformation is created and spread, they are getting inoculated.

"If only we could expose dishonest reasoning and lazy fallacies with games and TV shows the world would be a better place."

Solution: prebunking

Science denial, conspiracies and disinformation have a lot in common. Market operators focus on technique rebuttal rather than on fact rebuttal. They implement effectiveness studies in large-scale interventions.

By inviting people over to the other side they get acquainted with the techniques of manipulation that creators and spreaders of disinformation use. This acquaintance will protect them in future encounters with disinformation. They will recognize the methods used and are more resilient.

GEN 4 – 2020

What happened Violence and Health Risks

Problem paradigm Internal Actors

Deficit model Moderation

Focus on Rules and Regulations

Moderation

GEN 4

2020

Interventions:

- Oversight Boards
- Deplatforming
- Deranking
- Demonetization
- Laws and Regulation (DSA/DMA)
- Legal battles

Moderation

By restricting and sanctioning the transmission of disinformation its reach and effect is diminished.

"If only we could weed-out, downrank, tax, sue, label, deplatform, censor, discredit, definance the demagogues the world would be a better place."

Solution: obstructing

Reaction to perceived mass danger resulting from counter-narratives. Restricting expression of thought and speech as self-defence. Censoring blatant Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference.

Beliefs are the result of unbridled, repeated mass persuasion. There are only a handful of disinformation producers. If we obstruct the initial producers of mass persuasion the problem will get less and less.

Experiences with banning advertising for smoking, gambling and prescription drugs are a point in case. Individual behavior changes when the legal and informational contexts change.

GEN 5 - 2022

Interactionist

GEN 5

2022

Interventions:

- Street Epistemology
- Deep Canvassing
- Group Deliberation
- Multi-User Media Literacy

What happened	Conspiracy Galore
Problem paradigm	Societal Alienation
Deficit model	Interaction
Focus on	Group Dynamics and Behavior

Interactionist

People change their minds mainly by interacting with other people. Under the right conditions, people accept help from others to alter their conspiratorial beliefs.

"If only we could get people with different opinions to sit down and constructively find answers together the world would be a better place."

Solution: interaction

Disinformation and propaganda do not have mass appeal and do not constitute a problem on a mass media scale (contrary to popular belief). Left behind regions, distrust in institutions, and dislocated individuals cannot be addressed top-down.

Interactionist methods concentrate on group deliberation interventions that involve autonomous individuals. Minimum prerequisites for constructive group interactions are: experienced safety, experienced autonomy, experienced belonging, experienced achievement, and pluralism. Add to this: involving all individuals, personal narratives, I statements, gradual build-up of topics regarding divisiveness, and gradually less scripted communication structures.