

Wikipedia and Disinformation: the case of Homeland War in the Republic of Croatia

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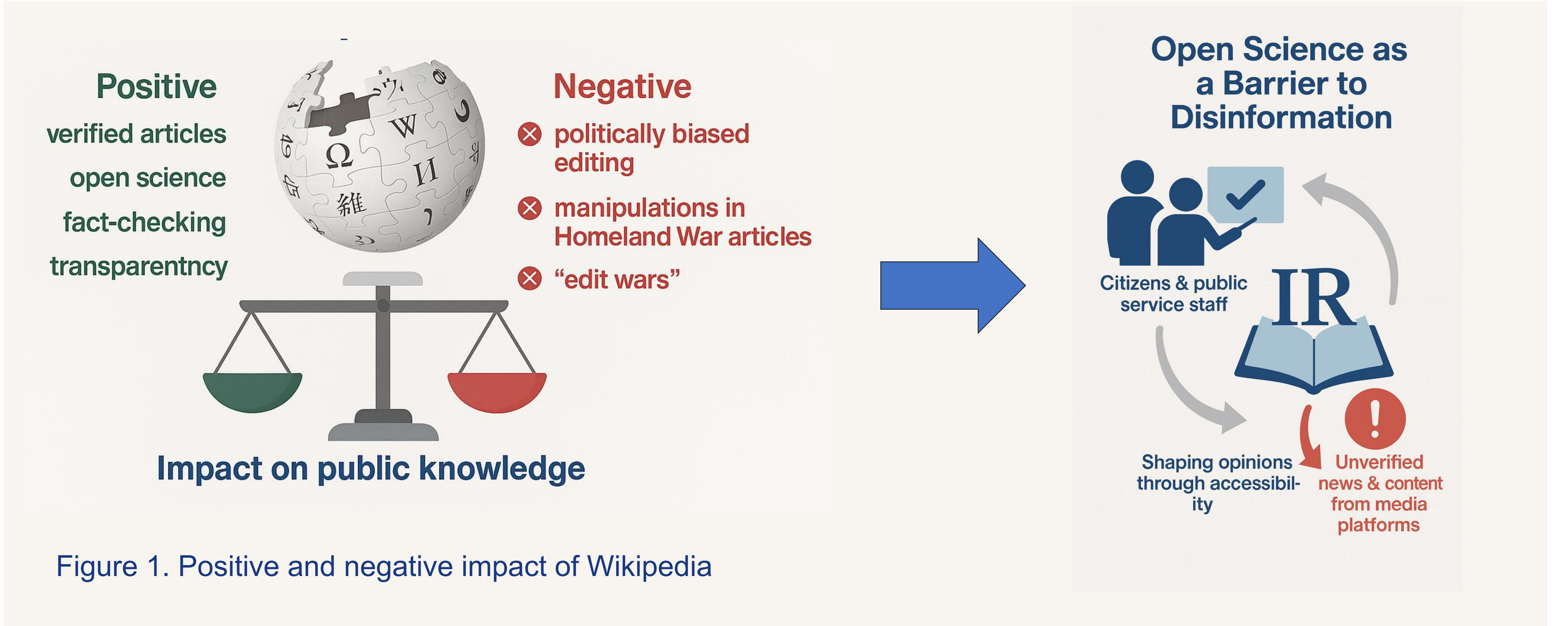


Figure 1. Positive and negative impact of Wikipedia

Introduction

By opening science to a larger number of users, i.e., by practicing Open Science, the effects of science itself are multiplied. Today, with broadband internet and ubiquitous information access, the popularization of science on digital platforms is extremely important to protect them from malicious influences. The role of science is extremely significant in all domains of human society, and its actions can be a factor of both stability and instability, especially on sensitive topics such as the Homeland War

The case of Homeland War

There is a known example where the Croatian Wikipedia was shown to be biased in shaping content, particularly concerning political and military topics, including the theme of the Homeland War. A disinformation campaign is extremely difficult to prove because intent must be detected; however, a certain lack of transparency was observed, to which the Wikipedia administrators reacted by employing so-called „fact checkers.,,, and the evaluation of the Croatian disinformation case was undertaken by an external expert on the subject matter publishing a 60 page report "*The Croatian Wikipedia Case: Encyclopedia of Knowledge or Encyclopedia for the Nation?*"

The digitization, updating, and popularization of national encyclopedic material would reduce the influence of sometimes unverified platforms in this field and enable the reception of verified knowledge. Furthermore, projects like the "Digitization of materials from the Homeland War" and the declassification, i.e., public accessibility, of parts thereof would create a basis for upgrading existing knowledge based on facts and authentic sources, thereby reducing the possibility of information manipulation

Misinformation vs. disinformation

For understanding disinformation campaigns, it is necessary to distinguish misinformation, which abounds in today's information space, from disinformation. The fundamental difference lies in the purpose, or goal. Namely, misinformation is not necessarily created to mislead the user; it can be the result of ignorance, incompetence, or simply the fabrication of unverified content. In contrast, disinformation represents deliberately sent false or partially false information with the intent to mislead the user.

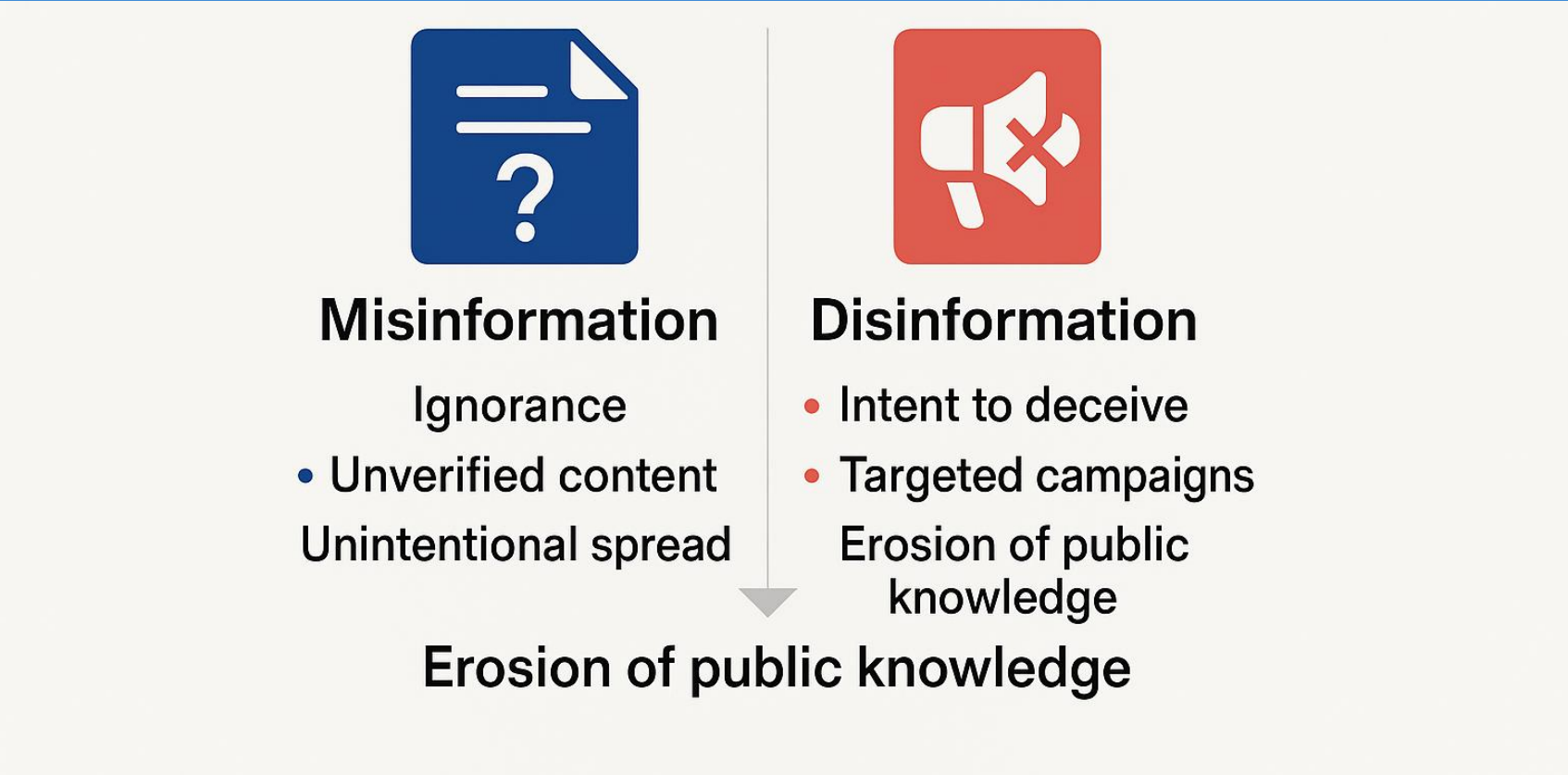


Figure 2. Misinformation vs. Disinformation

Conclusion

The contribution of open science principles would certainly include preventive activities such as educating public service staff through workshops and training them to detect and identify potential threats in the information space. The goal of this approach is, of course, not for scientists to become "fact checkers," but for open science to become a reference point for shaping opinions about phenomena through increased accessibility, while unverified informational content on various media platforms would be approached with a higher level of critical thinking. Thus, science would represent a partial barrier to the penetration of disinformation into the corpus of public knowledge.