Argument-checking AI shields against fake news and misinformation

Argument technology experts of the University of Amsterdam and MMGA join forces

The ISOC Netherlands Make Media Great Again Working Group (MMGA) decided to collaborate with two members of the KRINO team, focused on the development of an AI-powered argument-checking tool. The collaboartion will strengthen the shared mission of reversing the trend of an increased amount of disinformation and fake news that is dividing the world increasingly and causing more impactful societal and psychological consequences each day.

Fact-checking is a key journalistic action nowadays, but it doesn't cover all aspect of debunking misinformation and fake news: verifying the arguments themselves seems a necessary and fundamental part of the information quality control process. That's the gap KRINO is determined to bridge.

KRINO team members, Dr. Federica Russo and Dr. Jean Wagemans, both working at the University of Amsterdam, aim to find new ways to teach people about, and empower them with critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is the analysis of fact to form a judgment. The earliest records of critical thinking are the teachings of Socrates recorded by Plato. Now in 2020, Dr. Wagemans has created a modernized critical thinking canvas, labeled Periodic Table of Arguments, that is converted by the MMGA team into a tool for citizens outside of the academic world to recognize argumentative fallacies that are exploited in the media which lead to misinformation, e.g., in the format of undisputed political speeches.

Eventually the information pollution shield that MMGA and KRINO are developing will provide people with a systematic philosophical guard mainly for their online news consumption and voting orientation, but useful for all informational aspects of modern life.

The urgency of working on these matters now is that the spreading of disinformation and fake news is dividing the world increasingly and seeing more impactful societal and psychological consequences each day. The US elections have already proven the threat posed by the matter, and the Dutch elections are underway. Action needs to be taken now. The KRINO team and MMGA decided to collaborate in order to strengthen each other's mission and form a stronger and resilient community to reverse this trend.

KRINO is envisioned as a transparent, explainable artificial intelligence (XAI) that helps its users to evaluate arguments. The arguments can occur in various contexts – from political manifestations and speeches, to doctors' recommendations, to social media posts. In contrast to many AI-based tools, KRINO will not be a fully-automated engine, since that would defy the purpose of serving as human aid rather than dictating the outcomes based on algorithms only.

The focus of KRINO lies on developing a human-first AI tool including the much needed ethical implications continuously put in the forefront. Part of that philosophy is to create an explainable tool, not a black box as many AI tools that are currently being produced. KRINO XAI is in full development and will be largely based on the learnings that the KRINO team will gather by collaborating with the MMGA, and larger, ISOC community.

Currently, KRINO and MMGA fully focus on developing a user-friendly training track for MMGA annotators, ISOC Members and the broader online audience to power up their online resilience against information pollution and rhetoric tricks during the Dutch elections of 17 March 2021. As kick-off of the Argument-checking training track of KRINO-MMGA an interactive webinar is launched in the start of 2021.

Stay tuned to hear more about the latest developments around the upcoming MMGA Argument-checking trainings and KRINO as AI aid!

Register for more updates on the MMGA mailinglist.

ABOUT KRINO

Krino AI is an assistant to evaluate arguments in written natural language. It is not a fully-automated engine, but rather an aids human agents in analyzing written text and disentangling critical aspects of the underlying argument structure. Specifically, Krino will help with the verification of information present in a text, in terms of correctness and completeness, affordable and accessible to every competent user, resulting in the corroborated belief about analyzed arguments and decision-making. Krino aims to be a tool which gives the user the possibility of enhancing/upgrading/improving their cognitive and social environment (and the information they analyze) by making it more transparent, rational, and comprehensible. In this sense, Krino contributes to fighting misinformation and to producing better contents. Krino is designed as an inspectable, white-box AI engine that communicates with the user in natural language.

ABOUT ISOC NL MMGA WG

The Internet Society The Netherlands and Make Media Great Again have joined forces as the ISOC NL MMGA Working Group (WG). In conjunction with other Internet Society divisions worldwide (called chapters), the ISOC MMGA Working Group is setting-up a Global (mis)Information Observatory (GIO) as one of the first priorities. Multiple ISOC chapters within countries such as Benin, India, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Suriname have already initiated a collaboration with MMGA concerning fake news webinars and localized improvement of online news media. The Working Group will collaborate with impactful media and scientists but also with the MMGA community consisting of critical thinking citizens and experts called "MMGA annotators". MMGA annotations are practicable suggestions in the form of labelled notes, directly attributed to words, sentences or paragraphs. They are actionable for the news editor, avoid debate based on personal preferences and, if correct, directly trigger a correction within articles. Editors are free to implement or not. Because the annotations are immediately executable and based on the principle of journalistic objectivity, they overcome the known issue of lengthy debate due to subjectivity that arises with regular reader comments.

ABOUT MAKE MEDIA GREAT AGAIN

What we do: Collaborating with publishers and community to fight misinformation

We improve the quality of media together with their pool of knowledgeable readers, viewers and listeners. We have built a transparent system for actionable suggestions and specific remarks from our community pool of experts and critical thinkers.

NU.nl and AD.nl, two of the "Big Four" largest Dutch online news platforms, are our co-development partner and client. The system of MMGA is continuously tested with a screened and trained group of critical readers ('annotators') who offer constructive suggestions to increase the journalistic quality via balanced use of sources and clearer transfer of information.

Why we do it: improve the credibility of media and strengthen the bond with their audience

The credibility of the media is being questioned more and more, whereas the media are the first parties to protect us from mis- and disinformation. This fundamental role of media is essential to enable proper functioning of democracy and constructive social debate, thus fortify social cohesion.

How we do it: Improving the quality of media through annotations

We believe people have unique, diverse views and also relevant knowledge that helps the editorial process and quality.

With our digital tools people are able to detect misinformation, biased language and false contextualisation. MMGA introduces the notion of "annotations" in online journalism, initially in The Netherlands and subsequently worldwide. MMGA annotations are suggestions directly attributed to sentences or paragraphs. They are actionable for the editor, avoid debate based on personal preferences and, if correct, directly trigger a correction within articles.

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