

How did I end up here? Advocating for situated media literacy

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Publication date

2023

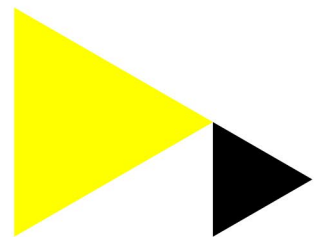
Document Version

Final published version

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

de Vos, J. M., Witschge, T. A. C., & Niederer, S. M. C. (2023). *How did I end up here? Advocating for situated media literacy*. 35. Abstract from MISDOOM.

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5th Multidisciplinary International
Symposium on Disinformation in
Online Open Media -
MISDOOM 2023

November 21-22, 2023
Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

**EXTENDED
ABSTRACTS**

How did I end up here? Advocating for situated media literacy

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Media literacy is an important element in countering the harmful effects of dis- and misinformation. To date, the main perspective on media literacy can be described as a ‘liberalist’ view of media literacy, focused on the nature and source of individual messages (Phillips and Milner, 2021). In this approach, media literacy initiatives mainly focus on equipping ‘citizens with the necessary skills to make sense of the message they read, see and hear’ (Phillips and Milner, 2021: 151). Such initiatives, though important and well-intended, are limited in effect and in some cases even strengthen rather than diminish the harmful impact of specific content and messages. In this paper, we will report and reflect on the insights from the project “Putting Disinformation on the Map” in which we use creative, participative, visual and digital methods to understand how we can expand our understanding of media literacy. A central question to our inquiry is how to orientate and situate yourself in a media landscape which is inherently interconnected, networked and interdependent, also understanding yourself as a contributing actor: How can we experience our place and role in the media landscape and the workings of more structural elements of platforms, algorithms and media logic explicit and tangible?

In our research, we develop and test creative interventions that invite people to become aware of the workings of online networks and algorithms: How one might easily travel from one point of a particular debate or discourse to another, rapidly jumping to different visual cultures, narratives and vernaculars, ending up somewhere deep within a coherent frame which is hard to match and thus counter from within another frame. Particularly as this often happens without being explicitly aware of the inherent connectedness of this media landscape, it is beneficial to show how one “ends up” in such a place, and also to consider one’s own role in shaping the network. How can you understand where you are in relation to these different parts of the landscape, different types of more or less problematic online discourses? What places are in the vicinity, and what might show up when you make a certain turn opposed to taking another exit - and what signposts and signposting practices might look like to help the traveller understand their position?

Operationalising the extensive conceptualisation of ecological literacy developed by Phillips and Milner (2021) in their book “You are here,” we analyse the online content on the theme of “weight loss” in the online platforms TikTok, Telegram and Instagram (see figure 1 for one of the outputs). We employ three larger strands of design research; 1) collaborative mapping and mapmaking, 2) co-designing navigation and signposting materials and 3) artistic creation of storytelling devices drawing on generative AI. Under the header of “situated media literacy”, in this paper, we endeavour to help build a more expansive view of the agency of individuals in a complex media landscape which is inherently connected, ever-changing with different moving elements being interdependent of one another.

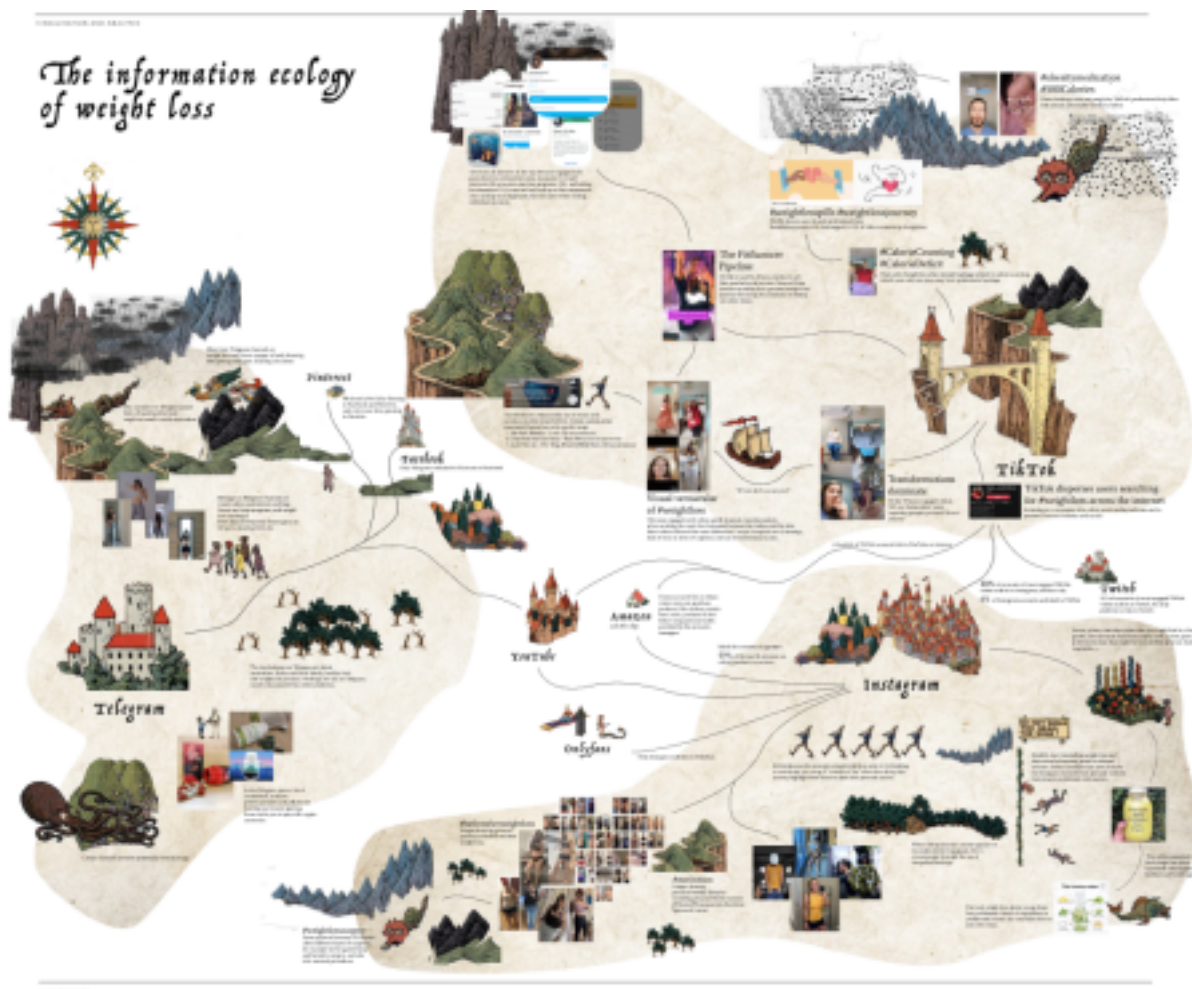


Fig 1.

Media landscape of ‘weight loss’, this map was produced using the content, narratives and visual culture one might encounter if you would query different platforms for ‘weightloss’, reappropriated drawing of the visual elements of the Land of Make Believe (Jaro Hess from the 1930s) in a collaborative map-making program.

This ongoing research project is funded by the SIDN fund, project partners include the Dutch Sound and Vision (Beeld & Geluid), KB (Nationale Bibliotheek) and journalism partner Verspers.

References

Phillips, W., & Milner, R. M. (2021). *You are here: A field guide for navigating polarized speech, conspiracy theories, and our polluted media landscape*. MIT Press.

Additional short abstract

Media literacy is an important element in countering the harmful effects of dis- and misinformation. To date, the main perspective on media literacy can be described as a ‘liberalist’ view of media literacy, focused on the nature and source of individual messages (Phillips and Milner, 2021). In this approach, media literacy initiatives mainly focus on equipping ‘citizens with the necessary skills to make sense of the message they read, see and hear’ (Phillips and Milner, 2021: 151). In this paper, we report and reflect on the insights from the project “Putting Disinformation on the Map” in which we use creative, participative, visual and digital methods to

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