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(Interviewauszug für ts.de)

We published a summary about all the conspiracy theories around the Charlie Hebdo massacre, because everywhere in the world, you can find someone telling you, "I know what happened at Charlie Hebdo".

And they're using fake videos everywhere.

Those are all stories we debunked and fake information we debunked. If you travel around the world, you can see people telling you, "I know that what happened at Charlie Hebdo. It was not what the media are telling you, because I saw this video on Facebook." So we did it very carefully, story by story, to show that these videos are fake, they're telling you wrong stories.

KS: For example, what did they tell?

(Shows two press photos of a car) For example, this one was very clear. These killers, they fled using a car, this car. And you have the photo of this car at two moments in the day: when they left Charlie Hebdo and a few blocks after that, they had an accident, and you could see the same car. And the people were saying, "well, you see on this photo the mirrors,

they look, you know, like they glitter, they're kind of white. And on the other photo, the police is telling us that it's the same car, but look, they're black." So they're saying, "it's all fake, and if they're telling you wrong story for that, they're lying the whole way." But of course there was a very simple explanation. It's the

same car, but according to the sunlight, the color of the mirrors changes. So that seems obvious to you, but so many people believed it in France.

KS: So finally, can you catch up by verifying or not verifying things and put the clear version out and correct everything, or is it getting more and more because people just like these conspiracy theories?

Of course it looks like a lost battle because any video with like a dark voice explaining to internet users that it's lies and spreading this conspiracy theory, every video like that gets thousands, sometimes millions of views. And when you work and investigate on a story, then it's very difficult to reach as many people, so it's kind of a drop of water in the ocean. But does it mean we don't have to do that job? No, I don't think so, I think even if it's a hard job, even if it's difficult to catch up with millions of people who want to lie to you, it's my job as a journalist to do it.

KS: What does it mean? I mean we started with praising the internet as some democratic tool to bring out the truth. Now we learn that it's not that simple. Does it mean that things got worse just because of the internet?

No, I think the internet has all the good in the world and all the bad in the world, so you can't blame the internet. Because this photo, this fake photo, there were also other internet users telling the people that it was fake. So you can find the antidote too, if you want, to the lies.

KS: What is the task? To regain ground because people are telling us as well that we are lying, that we are part of the system and part of, you know, that you shouldn't trust media because they are too close

to the governments and whatever? Or do we have the wrong filters and listen to too many people? What has changed, what do you think is going on actually?

Well, it's a very large question. Of course there are many more people lying to us because there are many more people who have the access to publishing tools. Before, you had a few people who were able to tell, on TV, lies and propaganda. Now everybody can set up a blog and have a Facebook page and get millions of people who are following him. So of course, it's more difficult to fight against it. And the other reason is people don't trust the media the way they used to. And before that, we had these brands, we were 'France24', we were 'Le Monde', we were the 'ARD', and people trust us just because we said we were journalists. That's not the case anymore, especially with young people. They don't trust journalists. So I think the only solution is to show exactly how we work, to show step-by-step how we verify information. It's not enough to say, we know, and that's that truth. We need to explain to people how we know it's the truth, because that's what the conspiracy theorists are doing. They are pretending to have these scientific explanations which are totally fake, but they make people believe that they can understand everything exactly. It looks real. I think we need to do the opposite, we need to show how we work, and to show how we verify information, I think that's key.

KS: So you hope that in the long run it will become obvious that quality media do a better job, is that right?

Yeah, but at the end of the day, that is also a question of money. Time and money, and time is money in our world. So we have a team of journalists, we have seven people working on that. You need to spend money on it,

because it's investigating. It's not just – I mean the media is so used to just taking photos and videos from different sources, packaging all that and sending that out. It's easy job, it doesn't cost a lot, and you make your TV show out of it. If you want to investigate and do some in-depth investigation about whether or not this is fake or true, it costs money. And people have to understand that, it's not free. And it's a problem now because nobody wants to pay for media, so everybody thinks that, "oh, you can have the information you want on the internet, and it's free." Okay, but if you want that, then people will lie to you, and you'll be manipulated.

KS: So we have to afford if you want to work solid?

Yeah, I mean at the end of the day, this investigation I'm talking about, it costs money. Often it's people working two, three days, a week on a story. And the media I think became lazy. We're used to receiving information, we package things, and we publish it, and that's it. Now we need to go back to what's really our work, which is to verify information. And that costs money.

KS: Is the audience ready to pay for it?

That's a problem. The audience likes to say, "everything is free on the internet, you can have anything on facebook, on twitter." Okay. But if you don't pay for information, then don't blame the media and don't say you're gonna be manipulated, because information has a cost, real information investigation has a cost, it's as simple as that.

KS: So what do you think, how is it gonna end?

Well, I can't predict the future of media, I'm just trying to do my job. I work for public media, and I think you work for public media, and that's our job to do it.

KS: What do you tell people who say, “well, as a public broadcaster you are part of the system because you are so close to your government”? You get those charges, I’m sure.

Of course, we get criticized all the time, like, “you media, you’re close to politicians, you give us the official version,” and so on. And I think that’s why I think we need to change our position and change our way of talking to the audience. And not just asserting things, “this is the truth, I’m a journalist, I’m a professional, I don’t even talk about this bullshit online.” No. We need to tackle that. If someone is saying that’s true, if he’s saying I’m telling lies, I’m gonna explain to him why my version is the right one. And I explain it in very simple words, step-by-step, why I’m telling the truth and why he’s lying. So it’s a fight, and we don’t have to be afraid of this fight. We need to fight.