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To share or to stay silent? An ecological concept of online responsibility for social media

Current approaches for dealing with online misinformation shared on Social networking sites fall roughly under two distinct categories: systemic and user-centred. The systemic approaches are focused on the agency of online service providers (OSPs) and outline their duties and responsibilities to create “clean” environments where only verified information flows. Such approaches seem to downplay the user’s agency and thus hinder the possibilities for users to critically engage with the online information. On the other hand, user-centred approaches expect online users to act in a responsible way when sharing or posting information online, and take different measures to ensure that. One such measure is nudging users into virtuous behaviour, which may lead to desired results but undermines again the assumption of the user's agency. In this paper, I will argue that neither of the two approaches are satisfactory in their conceptualisation of online agency which leaves us with a moral gap of responsibility concerning misinformation, and I will propose to overcome these difficulties through an ecological concept of online responsibility. I shape this concept starting from Luciano Floridi's notion of distributed moral agency online which I will complement by adding in Andy Clark's notion of ecological control, while explicitly avoiding the pitfalls of nudging users into moral behaviors. After fleshing out the ecological concept of online responsibility, I will give a concrete example of how this approach can be designed for in a social networking site.