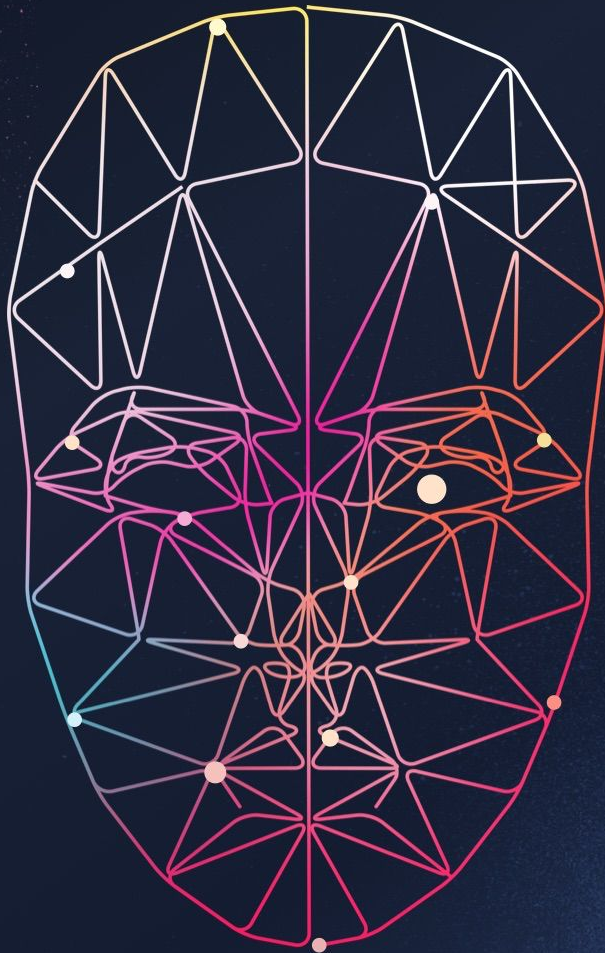


# Tools for democracy

Troll Factory - fighting  
information operations  
with an immersive  
educational game

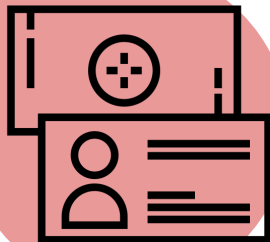
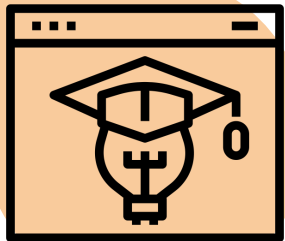




## Context

Algorithmic platforms (social media, search engines etc.) affect our everyday experiences, actions and choices.

At the same time, it's increasingly hard to understand their effect on individual, communities, environment and the society as a whole.



## The Big Why?

**We need new methods and tools to make algorithmic power concretely accessible, visible and comprehensible to journalists and user-citizens.**

Our mission at Yle News Lab is to explain the new algorithmic reality by building concrete tools and digital experiences that enable ordinary people to better understand how this new world works.



## Troll Factory game

**An educational game** combines real-life social media examples with a gamified storytelling experience.  
**Launched in Finland May 22nd 2019.**

In the game you become an internet troll that uses fake news, botnets and conspiracy theories to spread fear, hate and distrust. The better you succeed, the more influential you become.

**Through the game the user understand the variety of methods and effects of information operations and warfare.**

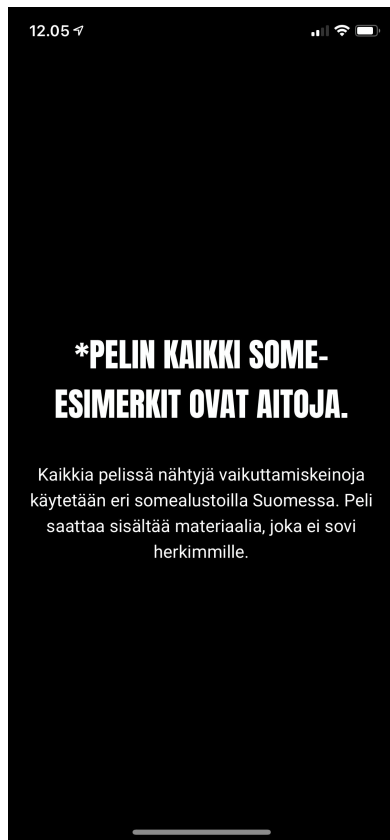
The game is online: <https://trollitehdas.yle.fi/>



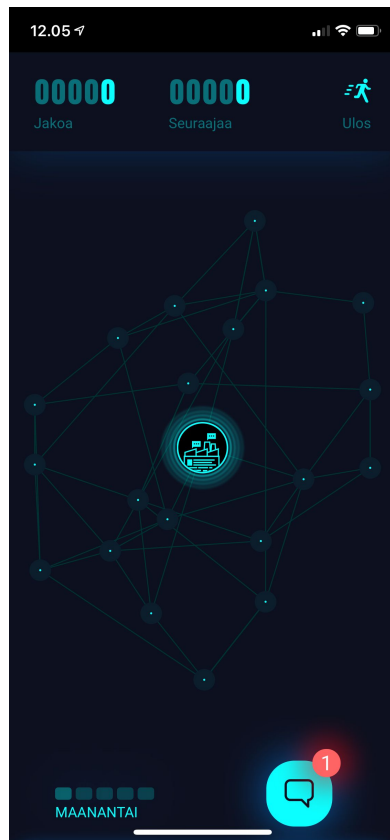
## Towards personalized content

Troll Factory is directed especially to people who are not interested in reading articles or listening to/watching expert analysis on complex topics, such as information operations and fake news.

The game uses interactive storytelling methods: the user's own choices affect the experience and its outcomes directly. Thus the experience becomes personalized, increasing engagement and immersivity.



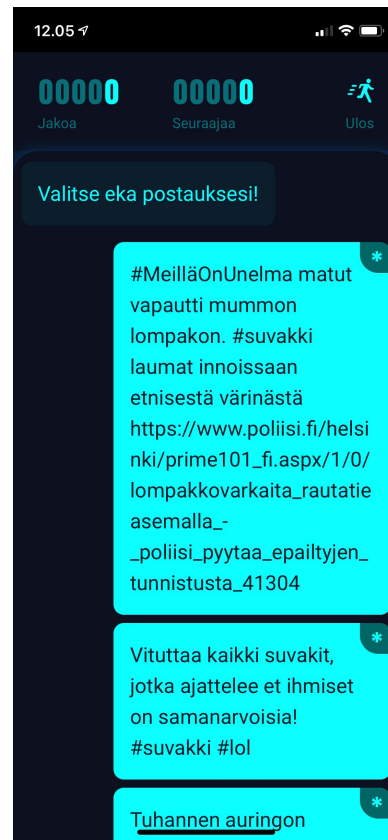
All examples from social media  
are real and genuine



The game objective: spread your  
influence through information  
warfare and automated systems



You get instructions and feedback  
from your boss at the Troll Factory

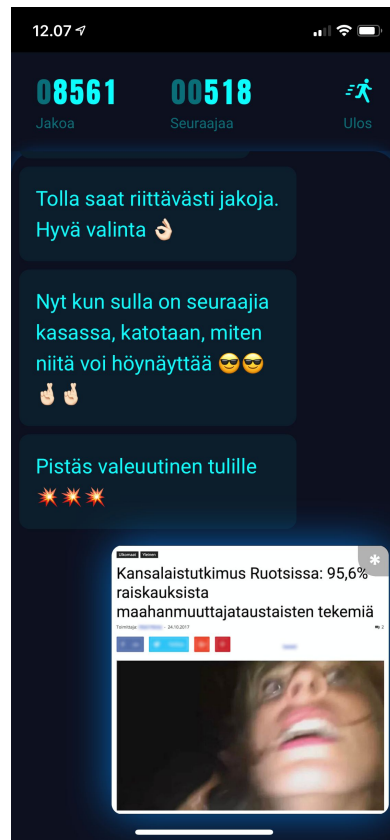


You select posts and methods to  
spread your influence

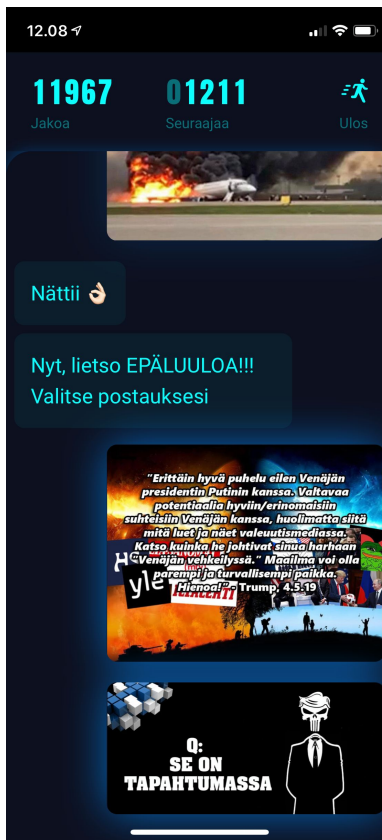




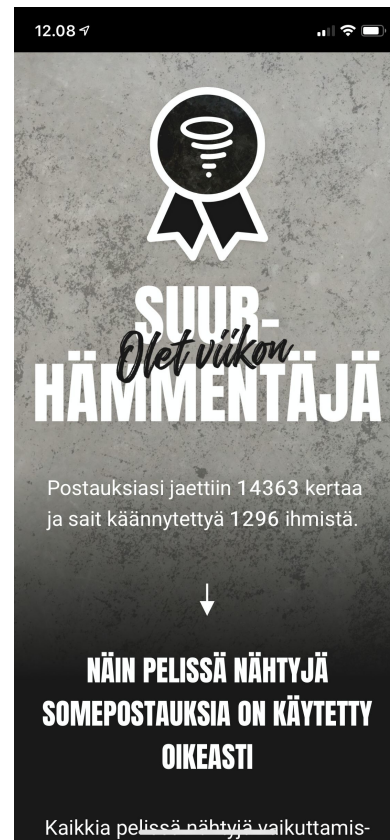
The game contains real-life examples e.g. of hate speech...



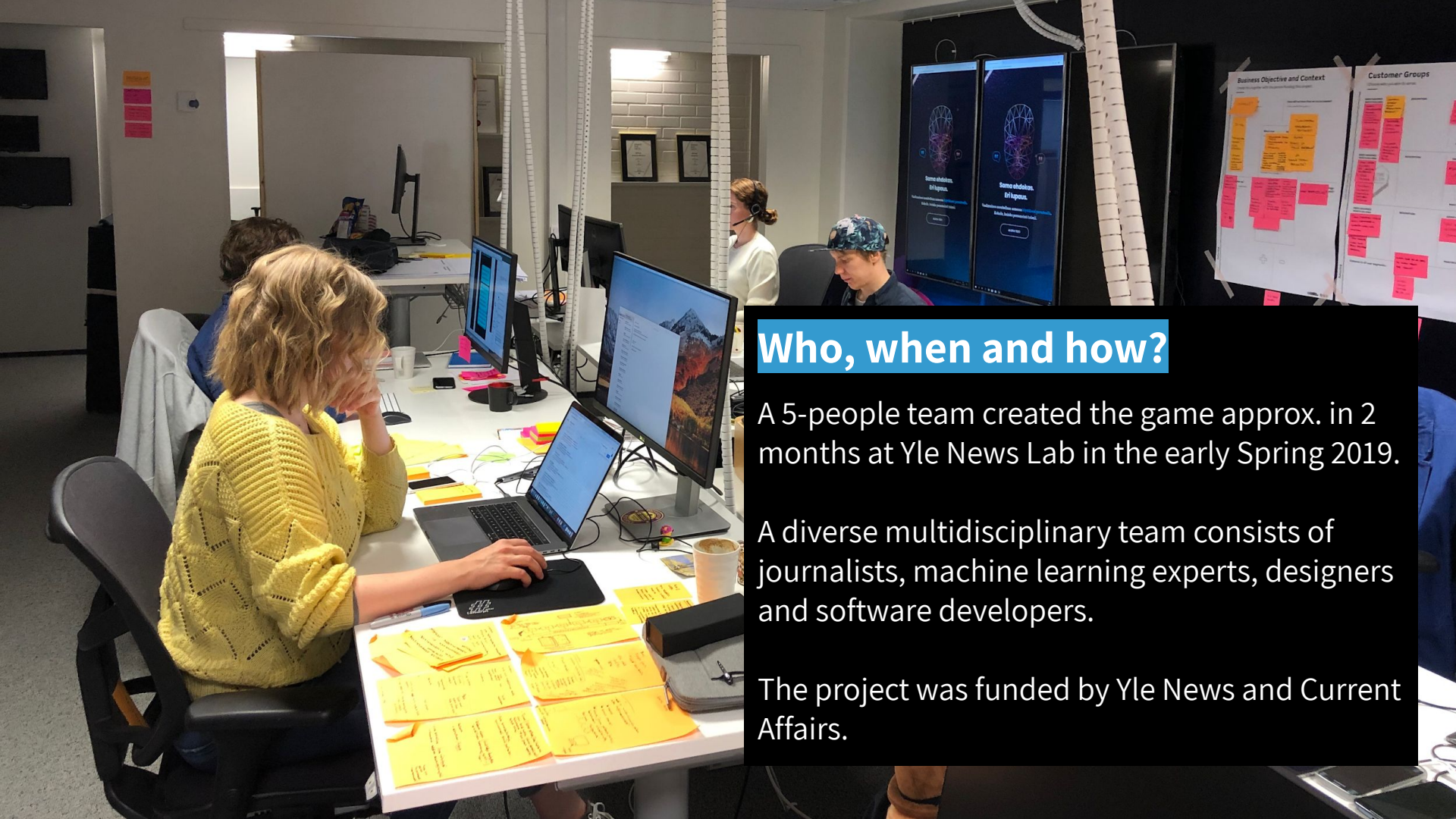
Fake news



Conspiracy theories



The game summarizes the results of your choices and provides links to further material



## Who, when and how?

A 5-people team created the game approx. in 2 months at Yle News Lab in the early Spring 2019.

A diverse multidisciplinary team consists of journalists, machine learning experts, designers and software developers.

The project was funded by Yle News and Current Affairs.





## Early impact: lots of interest and supporting feedback

A new storytelling format combines investigative journalism, service design and data science, creating new knowledge and practices in the newsroom and for the whole news organization.

People in the field of media education, in youth organizations and cyber/national security organizations have been interested in utilizing Troll Factory to spread media literacy and awareness about social media and information operations.

The theme of the game was chosen based on background research. Continuing information operations around immigration using fake news, internet memes and the polarization of public discourse are systematic and organized.

## Early impact: lots of interest and supporting feedback

The game uses authentic social media examples of fake news, hate speech and emotive content. Without depicting the reality as it is, it's not possible to convey the realistic forms of information operations and their concrete effects on individuals and society as a whole.

In an immersive game the player experiences the information operations first-hand in a realistic mobile setting. This gives her a chance to reflect and choose her actions based on the reality of things, and to better understand the consequences of such activities. And even further, to participate in preventing the spread of fake news and hate speech through deliberate actions in real-life social media.

When you know the possibilities, risks and effects of information operations and their various manifestations, you have better capabilities to make choices regarding your own behavior.



## Early data: fluent and immersive game-play

Troll Factory is an experimental educational game. In the attention economy in which everyone competes on your time, we have had very encouraging early reception.

**21 000**

Unique visitors (in less than a month)\*

**6 min**

Play-time spent per user

**63%**

Of the users who started the game played it through

\* Due to the sensitive nature of the game experience and content the user can play it anonymously, without logging in. Thus we don't have data on the player profiles/demographics.

Source: Adobe Analytics





## Next steps

The game launched in Finland May 22nd 2019. Different youth-related organizations have been interested in using the game for educational purposes and it's currently free to use at <https://trollitehdas.yle.fi/>

The game was made initially in Finnish. We're currently finishing an English version that will be launched in the early Fall 2019 (TBC).

The team behind the game continues working on new immersive, personalized openings based on the learnings of the game.

Simultaneously, we'll work closely with our newsrooms and other teams to bring the combination of journalism, service design and data science into very core of our journalistic practices.