

Documentation Tuesday

Social networks and manipulation (Mossos d 'Esquadra)

We met at the high school and then took the train to Inca. When we arrived in Inca Professional Formation High School we started with the warm up activities. We divided in groups of the sport we're practicing, the nationalities we are, height and age.

Then Xavier Bertomeu told us something about social networks and how they can manipulate us. He is a member of Mossos, they are the public police in Catalonia, you can only find them there. He explained how the police use social media. They use social media to upload videos for general prevention, they inform about their police work and Mossos as an organization, they also try to be an official reliable source and they want to collaborate with the citizens.

They work with social networks and they use them to inform people in case of an emergency or other important events, for example a really bad traffic jam. They told us that they first verify the information, they make sure that the information is useful for the people and their aim is also calm people.

We watched a video about what they did during the terrorist attack in Barcelona on the 17th of August, 2017. They taught us what to do during an attack. You have to run, hide and alert the police. When the terrorist attack in Barcelona happened, they published 301 tweets because it's important to them to show transparency. The tweets were also published in different languages so that everyone can understand the messages.

After the terrorist attack Twitter became the most important social network for the Mossos. They had 511'000 followers. Facebook had 333'000 followers and Instagram had 110'000 followers. So the public work on social media gained them a lot of new followers.

Fake News

In the second part of the presentation Jordi Peña told us some interesting things about fake news and how to avoid them.

He explained the differences between propaganda and fake news:

– Propaganda is used to promote a political cause or point of view. It's based on information, ideas, opinions or images which are spread with the intention of influencing people's opinion. This doesn't mean that the information has to be wrong.

– Fake news on the other hand are false stories that appear as true news which are spread on the internet and in other media. They are created either to influence political views or just as jokes to fool people.

We can divide fake news into two different kinds. The first kind of fake news are just false pieces of information which are completely made up by the author. The second kind of fake news are pieces of information or pictures which were published a long time ago and are now republished within a new context.

Later on we learnt how to avoid fake news in our daily life and how we identify them. For example, he told us we should always double check the sources we've got our information from and we should get them from at least two different sources.

In the end, Jordi Peña showed us how the Mossos d'Esquadra avoids fake news in 6 steps:

- monitoring social media
- asking the journalists for collaboration and avoiding confusion
- constant information
- only publish information that doesn't affect their investigation
- ask citizens for collaboration
- refutation of rumours and negation of existing rumours

The presentation was very interesting and we learnt a lot about fake news and how to avoid them properly.