



#DeplatformIcke

How Big Tech powers and profits from David Icke's lies and hate, and why it must stop

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CCDH finds practical solutions to the instrumentalisation of identity-based hate to polarise and undermine democracies worldwide.

Hateful discourse hardens differences, coarsens the public sphere and leads to anger and violence.

Proponents of hate are quick to adopt new techniques and technologies, particularly social media, to spread their ideas and beliefs.

We have seen it in the UK and US, throughout Europe, and further afield – from Brazil to Nigeria, India to Israel.

Populist politicians have allied with haters to gain new advocates and troll armies to harass opponents and institutions that provide checks and balances in liberal states, like the media and judiciary. If we do not deal with this threat, it threatens to undermine our democracies.

CCDH works with practitioners in diverse fields, such as political science, behavioural science, the law, countering violent extremism and counterterrorism, child protection and identity-based hate to develop strategies that strengthen tolerance, liberalism and democracy, and counterstrategies to the new forms of political hate.

Introduction

For many people, David Icke is a joke, whose public life ended when he declared himself the “son of God” live on the BBC thirty years ago.

In truth that interview was the start of a new and profitable career as a professional conspiracy theorist, in which Icke has spent decades promoting bigotry and misinformation.

Icke’s popularity was turbocharged by social media, where he has an audience of two million followers. His website is one of the 1,000 most popular in the UK. Recent polling by Hope Not Hate revealed that more than half of the UK population have heard of Icke.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has clarified the threat David Icke poses to public safety. His conspiracy theories about COVID-19 have been viewed over 30 million times on social media, making him the leading producer of misinformation on the disease.

Taken together, his videos outline a “superconspiracy” in which COVID-19 does not exist and has been invented by a “global cult” to justify the imposition of an “Orwellian global state”. Millions have watched Icke explain how Bill Gates and the Jewish Rothschilds form part of that cult, and how 5G networks and vaccines are the real cause of COVID-19.

This is having real world consequences. In the UK, there was a wave of arson attacks on 5G phone masts after videos of Icke falsely linking them to COVID-19 were shared in Facebook groups, amassing millions of views. In North America, anti-lockdown protestors have cited David Icke as their inspiration.

Research by Dr Daniel Allington published by CCDH shows that those who are persuaded by conspiracy

theories are less likely to follow the government’s guidance to wash their hands regularly, stay at home and socially distance.

Icke profits from all this misinformation. His YouTube videos generate ad revenue both from Google Ads and from his sponsor, an investment firm seeking to exploit the paranoia of Icke’s followers.

Social media platforms profit from hosting Icke too. His audience of over two million followers could be worth up to \$23.8 million in annual revenue, primarily generated by advertisers seeking to reach Icke’s fans as well as the money Icke and his collaborators spend to reach a wider audience. Facebook and Twitter even allow advertisers to target people with an interest in Icke and 5G. Meanwhile, Amazon and Apple TV sell access to videos in which Icke promotes antisemitic conspiracy theories, denies climate change is real and encourages people to refuse vaccinations.

Removing this content in a piecemeal fashion will not work. YouTube attempted this with the removal of just some of Icke’s videos on 5G in early April, only to leave his misinformation network intact and able to launch a recruitment drive that gained over 320,000 followers in a week.

We have seen that if they want, social media companies can act. Alex Jones, the proprietor of US ‘fake news’ outlet InfoWars, was deplatformed by social media companies for his hate and misinformation. The only way to rein in Icke’s hate and misinformation is to deplatform him now, before inaction on his lies and hate end up costing lives.

Imran Ahmed
CEO, CCDH

David Icke is the leading producer of COVID-19 misinformation

David Icke's conspiracy theories about the coronavirus have been viewed over 30 million times across social media. His videos are popular on every major social network, and spread misinformation about the coronavirus, including denying its existence.¹

These videos present an overarching “superconspiracy” that COVID-19 does not even exist and has been invented by a “global cult” in order to justify the imposition of a “beyond Orwellian global state”. Millions have watched Icke explain how Bill Gates and the Rothschilds form part of that cult, and how 5G networks and vaccines have made people more vulnerable to the disease.

These figures are based on an analysis of videos that feature Icke speaking about the coronavirus on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, available as a dataset accompanying this report. Some of these videos are posted to Icke's personal accounts, while others are posted by collaborators and supporters detailed later in this document.

This reach is possible thanks to a social media following of over 2 million fans, built over a period of eleven years. Icke has gained an extra 370,000 followers since March by taking a leading role in promoting coronavirus misinformation. But Icke's conspiracy theories are likely to have reached many more people than these numbers suggest, as Twitter and Facebook do not reveal how many people see the memes and articles that Icke posts to those social networks daily.

Social media is helping drive Icke's real-world popularity. New polling from Hope Not Hate shows Icke is the most well-

known conspiracy theorist in the UK: 51 percent of respondents had heard of him and 12 percent said they had read his books or watched his videos.²

Icke's most popular coronavirus video

One YouTube video in which Icke claims the Rothschilds were involved in planning the coronavirus outbreak has been viewed 5.9 million times – enough to make it the 27th most viewed video about coronavirus on the platform.³

It repeats Icke's core claim that a “global cult” has planned the coronavirus outbreak in order to impose a “beyond Orwellian global state”. Icke also cast doubt on the spread and severity of the disease, saying “someone with an immune system in working order of any level will just swat it away.”⁴

The video has since been liked and shared over 376,000 times on Facebook.

Real world consequences

Icke's conspiracy theories are having real-world consequences. Icke has promoted anti-5G network conspiracies since 2016, and analysis using CrowdTangle show his videos are popular in anti-5G Facebook groups that have encouraged people to burn down mobile phone masts across the UK. Polling by Hope Not Hate shows that his website is the most popular alternative news source for 5G conspiracists.⁵

In the US, Icke's claim that COVID-19 is a hoax intended to justify a clampdown on personal freedoms appears to have influenced anti-lockdown protests outside state legislatures. One anti-lockdown activist in Vancouver told The Sun newspaper that he “is planning to

speak to David Icke in the coming days” and had been inspired by his videos.

Research from Dr Daniel Allington at King’s College London shows that people who believe false claims about the coronavirus, of which Icke is the leading producer, are more willing to ignore government advice on social distancing, staying at home, and regularly washing hands.⁶

Icke on COVID-19

“There is no COVID-19 - it doesn’t exist.”⁷

“COVID-19, what they are showing you on a slide, is actually exosomes, part of the bodies’ natural detoxification system... so we have a pandemic, it is claimed, by renaming a natural cellular response system ‘COVID-19’.”⁸

“This COVID-19 scam, hoax has been designed to create in very fast time the very global centralisation of power that I have been highlighting for 30 years is coming.”⁹

“This world is controlled by a cult... it wants to create a beyond Orwellian global state.”¹⁰

“This cult that I say absolutely is behind what’s going on has had a long-time ambition to create an economic catastrophe.”¹¹

“I have no doubt whatsoever from my thirty years of full-time research into this, that this coronavirus situation, the Sabbatian Frankists [Jewish cultists] will be behind it.”¹²

“The Rockefeller Foundation obviously is a front for the Rockefeller family which is fundamentally involved with this global cult, in fact the Rothschilds and the Rockefellers were the creators of the World Health Organisation.”¹³

“Bill Gates is one of the most sinister people on planet Earth... this is where

the game is going: that you have this vaccine full of shite to control you and undermine your health so we can have more pandemics, or you can’t mix with the rest of the community, you can’t fly, etcetera. Now, this is why, this is the real reason why, [Bill] Gates and GAVI, this vaccine alliance, has developed this quantum tattoo so they can tell who’s had the vaccine and who hasn’t.”¹⁴

“They ran this simulation called Event 201... so all these things that were decided in this Gates - World Economic Forum - one percent simulation six weeks before that they should happen are happening.”¹⁵

“Of course in the run up, in the immediate run up, to this so-called virus breaking out, we had 5G introduced, and Wuhan was the first 5G smart city in China. And what these electromagnetic fields do is poison cells.”¹⁶

“While this lockdown has been going on 5G masts are being rolled out at a very rapid rate... That is considered essential work, and to the cult it is essential, because they want 5G everywhere... and of course people are not able to protest because they are isolated from each other and under house arrest, that’s why they’re doing it.”¹⁷

“The more that they expand 5G, the more 5G is going to impact upon the population’s health, and the more it impacts upon the population’s health, the more they can say it’s caused by COVID-19. And if they start firing out 5G at 60GHz, they’re gonna have a lot of people who are gonna keel over ‘cause they can’t absorb oxygen.”¹⁸

“The vaccine is the punchline, because there’s gonna be stuff in that that is going to devastate not only the human body and mutate human DNA in the way that they want to do as they’re

transforming everything, but also affect people psychologically.”¹⁹

“The idea that you can catch a virus from money or shaking hands is absolute bollocks.”²⁰

“Why can’t I go out when I choose so long as I don’t go within 6 feet of people? And what you’re seeing, because it makes no sense, it makes no sense because it’s nonsensical, because it’s not about health it’s about control.”²¹

“I have not heard anybody say ‘so therefore this is what you need to do to boost your immune system: vitamin A, vitamin D3, vitamin C, that’s something to boost the thyroid that produces vitamin A. These things are crucial to increasing the strength of the immune system, immune systems by the way that are systematically weakened and dismantled from birth by an explosion of vaccination shite.”²²

Icke's COVID-19 “superconspiracy” unites different hate actors

Icke offers hate actors a uniting “superconspiracy” that aids the spread of coronavirus misinformation. As a result, Icke's videos and memes about COVID-19 are shared by disparate groups, from anti-vaxxers to far-right activists.

Conspiracy theory expert Prof. Michael Barkun has used the term “superconspiracy” to describe Icke's method of uniting a hierarchy of conspiracies underneath “a distant but all-powerful evil force manipulating lesser conspiratorial actors.”²³

Now that superconspiracy has grown to encompass the coronavirus: Icke's existing conspiracy theories about vaccinations and 5G signals have become parts of a wider plot organised by a “global cult” who invented the pandemic in order to impose totalitarian controls on the global population.

In this way, COVID-19 has proven to be Icke's latest opportunity to adapt his decades-old superconspiracy and win new followers, a tactic he has previously applied to events as disparate as the 9/11 attacks and the 2008 financial crisis.²⁴

Where necessary Icke has rapidly adjusted his superconspiracy to meet emerging trends. Whereas he appeared to acknowledge that the pandemic was real in March, by April he was ready to claim that “there is no COVID-19, it doesn't exist” based on a bogus theory that there are no reliable tests for detecting the disease.²⁵

By integrating coronavirus into his overarching superconspiracy, Icke is also able to direct new attention to his 11-year-old back catalogue of social media posts. Icke's 2016 video casting the UN's

Agenda 21 guidelines on sustainable development as a blueprint for global depopulation has seen renewed interest in light of new theories linking it to coronavirus, helping it reach an extra 260,000 people for a total of 3.8 million views.²⁶

While many people know Icke only as a proponent of New Age spiritual thinking, such as the belief that human beings are “infinite consciousness” in a “genetic spacesuit”. But the work of Dr Charlotte Ward and Prof. David Voas would suggest that these quasi-religious ideas simply function to disguise the underlying bigotry of Icke's conspiracy theories and make them palatable to a wider audience.²⁷

How Icke unites and promotes popular COVID-19 conspiracy theories

Icke's COVID-19 “superconspiracy”

Icke's central claim about COVID-19 as expressed in his most popular video is that the coronavirus outbreak has been created, invented or at least exaggerated by a “global cult” of which “the Rothschilds” are a key component.²⁸ Their aim, he believes, is to create a “beyond Orwellian global state” by means of movement restrictions, surveillance and depopulation.²⁹



Agenda 21 is a blueprint for depopulation

The UN's Agenda 21 sets out guidelines for sustainable development, but Icke wrote in 2010 that its purpose was "to use the excuse of the environment to transform global society."³⁰ This would later develop into a theory that Zionists planned to use Agenda 21 as "a Trojan horse to global fascism".³¹



Figure 303: Agenda 21 is indeed a Trojan horse to global fascism

From the outset of the coronavirus outbreak, Icke's 2016 video about Agenda 21 was the most popular on YouTube with millions of views. Agenda 21 has now become a popular conspiracy theory about coronavirus, alleging that the UN and WHO are promoting the spread of the disease in order to achieve the aims of depopulation and tyrannical control of the world's population.³²

5G signals are designed to weaken the immune system

Icke first claimed that 5G could be harmful to life in a 2016 tweet,³³ subsequently releasing over a dozen YouTube videos that linked 5G to everything from cancer to climate change, attracting 875,000 views in total. In fact, Icke's history of opposing mobile phones goes back even further to 1999 when he predicted they would "do enormous mental and physical damage".³⁴

Beginning in March, Icke has been linking 5G to COVID-19, claiming that it suppresses the immune system and is a major cause of the disease, in videos seen by 2.8 million people and broadcast on London regional television.³⁵



Vaccines will be used to control the world population

Icke has claimed that vaccines cause disease since 1994, when he wrote that the US Government had deliberately used a hepatitis vaccine study to infect "young, white male homosexuals" with AIDS.³⁶ He subsequently decided against allowing his two sons to receive vaccinations³⁷ and backed the discredited research of Dr Andrew Wakefield that linked the MMR jab to autism.³⁸

According to Icke's "superconspiracy", what he currently calls "the Sabbatian-Frankist Big Pharma cartel" plans to use vaccines to damage the immune systems of the global population in order to make them reliant on drugs.³⁹ Past tweets show that Icke attacked research into vaccines for swine flu and H1N1 bird flu on a similar basis.⁴⁰

Icke has now claimed that a future coronavirus vaccine will be designed to destroy the immune systems of recipients, either to depopulate the world or to render people dependent on medication.⁴¹ His videos on this subject have received over a million views.



Bill Gates planned the pandemic

Icke's conspiracy theories about Bill Gates are closely related to the Microsoft billionaire's philanthropic support for vaccination programmes. Since 2010, Icke has repeatedly linked Gates' support for vaccination to plans to depopulate the world.⁴² For example, he has tweeted an image of a demonic-looking Gates preparing to administer a toxic injection to black children.⁴³

The latest iteration of this conspiracy theory relates to Event 201, a pandemic

simulation part-funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that took place in November last year. Icke's video titled "Event 201 Coronavirus Conspiracy" alleges that Gates helped plan the coronavirus pandemic. It has been seen by 315,000 people making it the seventh most viewed YouTube video on the topic, ahead of official videos about the exercise produced by the Center for Health Security, and has received over 8,400 engagements on Facebook.⁴⁴



Icke is using COVID-19 to promote a wider hate agenda

Icke's videos and memes about coronavirus provide an entry point to his wider hate agenda. The

superconspiracy that unites both is deeply antisemitic and makes it easy to transition to Icke's more explicit hate material.

These features form a funnel structure that directs curious viewers from popular channels that regularly present Icke as an expert speaker on coronavirus, through to Icke's own videos that play into current trends on hate and misinformation, arriving finally at the antisemitism that underpins all of Icke's work.

This process is likely to be accelerated further by the fact YouTube is still featuring Icke's videos amongst its recommendations, while Icke heavily promotes the extreme material in his website, books and speaking tours in most videos.

This strategy is working. Icke's social following is up by 370,000 despite most people viewing his videos on other channels like London Real.

1 Icke is introduced to viewers as an 'expert'

The most widely viewed videos of Icke speaking about coronavirus are hosted on his collaborators' social media channels and present him as an expert. London Real, the most popular of Icke's collaborators with 2.6 million followers across platforms, introduces Icke as "a full-time investigator into who and what is really controlling the world", and goes on to describe him as "the author of over 21 books and 10 DVDs [who has] lectured in over 25 countries, speaking live for up

to 10 hours to huge audiences, filling stadiums like Wembley Arena."⁴⁵

2 Icke uses COVID-19 as an introduction to his antisemitic superconspiracy

Antisemitism is intrinsic to Icke's COVID-19 superconspiracy. While Icke regularly changes the name he uses to refer to the powerful manipulators driving his theories, he often gives them an explicitly Jewish identity, as "Rothschild Zionists" or as "Sabbatian Frankists" (named after a sect of Judaism).⁴⁶ Even where Icke does not use these terms, he will often identify Jews as key members of the conspiracy.

Icke's most popular coronavirus conspiracy video on London Real with over 5.9 million views explicitly identifies "the Rothschilds" as key players in a global plot to use the disease as a pretence to impose a totalitarian world government.⁴⁷



3 Icke exploits trends in hate and misinformation to capture an audience

Icke has always been quick to exploit new trends in hate and misinformation to reach new audiences. Coronavirus is the latest example, but in recent years Icke has immersed himself in Islamophobia, transphobia, anti-migrant hatred and climate denial for the same reasons.

Islamophobia

Icke has claimed that the term “Islamophobia” is a “scam to silence criticism”,⁴⁸ and in his 2018 book approvingly quoted a French mayor who said “there were too many Muslim children in local schools.”⁴⁹ On Twitter and Facebook, Icke has spread fake news about Muslims preventing the celebration of Christmas⁵⁰ and moves “towards legalising rape committed by Muslim men” in Germany.⁵¹



Transphobia

Icke has claimed that the struggle for trans rights is actually a “war on the family unit” and part of a doctrine of “Cultural Marxism”.⁵² In tweets and Facebook posts, Icke has suggested schools are grooming children to become

transgender⁵³ and claimed that “transgender activism is a covert operation with our children in its gunsights”.⁵⁴



Anti-migrant hatred

Icke has claimed that the European migrant crisis was “systematically created” in order to “serve a global agenda” of mass migration.⁵⁵ In tweets and Facebook posts on this subject, Icke has blamed migrants for a “rape epidemic”⁵⁶ commenting “they want us living in fear”⁵⁷ and warned of a “migrant tide” using the same image as that used by UK far-right politician Nigel Farage to launch his anti-migrant “Breaking Point” campaign.⁵⁸ Another post used a deeply racist meme to illustrate an article about alleged migrant sexual assaults on both women and animals, featuring an image of angry young black men with the caption “we’re here to spread some diversity – prepare to be culturally enriched.”⁵⁹



Climate denial

Icke regularly refers to the “climate hoax”,⁶⁰ and has posted a number of videos with over half a million views promoting the conspiracy theory that climate change is being used as an excuse to destroy the economy and impose totalitarian government. In tweets and Facebook posts, Icke has branded David Attenborough a “climate change propagandist”⁶¹ and claimed that climate science is a “hoax... driven by Rothschilds, Rockefellers and [the] 1-percent banking elite.”⁶²



4 Icke constantly directs people towards his most extreme antisemitic material

Icke's videos constantly direct viewers to his website articles, books and videos of his speaking tours which contain his most extreme antisemitic material.

An article posted to Icke's website in 2000 states flatly that “Hitler was a Rothschild”, based on the fantasy that Hitler's grandmother had become pregnant out of wedlock by a man Icke claims was both a colleague and a member of the Rothschild family.⁶³ The same article claims that Jews planned the Holocaust in order to establish the nation of Israel:

“So now with the Rothschilds increasing their financing of Jewish settlements in Palestine, and with their agents in governments officially supporting their

plans for a Rothschild, sorry Jewish, homeland, they needed a catalyst which would demolish Arab protests at the take-over of their country. That catalyst was the horrific treatment of Jews in Germany and the countries they conquered by the Rothschild-funded Nazis and one of their own, a Rothschild called Adolf Hitler.”

Icke has held these views in one form or another for his entire career. Writing in 1995 he stated that “I am coming more and more to the conclusion that what happened to Jews in Nazi Germany (whatever the truth turns out to be) was supported, even planned, by these crazy people to ensure that both Israel was created and that ‘anti-Semitism’ could be used as a defence against legitimate investigation of their sickening activities. That has certainly been the outcome.”⁶⁴

Icke repeated this claim in his 2012 book *Remember Who You Are*, copies of which are available for resale on Amazon, saying: “Hitler and the Nazis were actually sent by the Rothschilds and Rockefellers to, in part, force Jews to go where the overwhelming majority did not want to go – Israel.”⁶⁵ It occurs yet again in his latest book, *The Trigger*, published just last year.⁶⁶

These form just part of Icke's antisemitism. He has suggested that Jews “arrange for ‘anti-Semitic events and attacks which allow this manipulation of the Jewish and non-Jewish communities to go on.”⁶⁷ He has opposed presenting children with an “unchallenged version of events” of the Holocaust.⁶⁸ He has claimed that “many Jewish people have also been programmed to see themselves as God's ‘chosen people’, above all the rest”.⁶⁹ He has branded the Nuremberg trials “a farce”⁷⁰ and insisted on the right to question the historical facts of the Nazi Holocaust.⁷¹ He considers the antisemitic

forgery *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* to be a genuine document.⁷²

An in-depth study of Icke's YouTube activity, led by Dr Daniel Allington, found Icke's arguments about "Rothschild Zionists" to mirror the claims of virulently antisemitic organisations such as the National Front and the Reich Press Office – and discovered that members of Icke's YouTube audience were inspired to make and "like" nakedly anti-Jewish comments of their own.⁷³

Icke's latest antisemitic video was posted on 20 March

Icke has not given up his deeply antisemitic views. A video posted to Icke's channel on 20 March is entitled

"Sabbatean Sabotage": a phrase referring to a supposed Jewish cult that Icke alleges to be manipulating world affairs. In the video, which is illustrated on YouTube with an image of conspiring Jews, Icke says "this coronavirus situation, the Sabbatean Frankists will be behind it",⁷⁴ claims that "Sabbatean Frankists ... were behind Hitler and the Nazis",⁷⁵ and says "there is evidence that Hitler was a Sabbatean".⁷⁶



Icke is supported by a sophisticated misinformation network

David Icke sits at the centre of a sophisticated misinformation network that helps his misinformation reach tens of millions. While it ultimately relies on his work, this network endlessly reinvents it for new platforms with vast new audiences.

The misinformation network brings together a small number of close collaborators: accounts that produce new content presenting Icke as an expert authority. The most effective of Icke's collaborators turn lengthy interviews with Icke into shareable clips tailored for particular social networks and share them with audiences that dwarf those of Icke's own accounts.

This content is then disseminated even further by a series of "recyclers" who constantly repost Icke's conspiracy theories, sometimes presenting them as lifestyle advice, health information or motivational speeches.

Together, recyclers and close collaborators ensure that Icke reaches a wider audience than he could ever reach alone, help build false "social proof" of his expertise and ensure that his conspiracy theories are endlessly reposted on every social media platform that they reach.

Icke's close collaborators have a combined following of 5.2 million across social media

London Real

Most people who have watched a video of David Icke setting out his coronavirus superconspiracy are likely to have done so on a social media channel operated by London Real. Its professionally produced interviews with Icke on COVID-19 present Icke as an expert authority on

the issue, and have been viewed 15.2 million times, including 1.9 million views on Instagram: a platform little-used by Icke himself.

London Real has been operating since 2011, amassing 2.6 million followers and over 222 million views on YouTube. Despite regularly promoting pseudoscience and conspiracy theories, the channel was able to leverage its following to secure a slot on the regional television channel London Live, which broadcasted a London Real interview with Icke in which he made false claims linking COVID-19 to 5G.⁷⁷

The same interview has been removed by YouTube in accordance with a new policy banning videos that promote conspiracies linking COVID-19 to 5G. This has prompted London Real to launch a fundraiser purportedly to fund further interviews for Icke and an independent video platform. The fundraiser received \$117,313 in its first 24 hours, demonstrating how seriously Icke's fans take him.⁷⁸

London Real is owned and operated by Brian Rose, a former banker. As well as earning money from advertising revenue, merchandise and donations, Rose uses the platform to promote a series of business courses costing up to \$2,997.⁷⁹

Shaun Attwood

Shaun Attwood is a former drug dealer who now operates a YouTube channel with 408,000 followers dealing in "true crime" and conspiracy theories.⁸⁰ Attwood's regular interviews with Icke are posted to YouTube channels belonging to both men. Their most recent interview promoted the

conspiracy theory that Bill Gates used the Event 201 pandemic simulation to plan the coronavirus outbreak and was seen by 315,000 people in total.

Other collaborators

A number of Icke's other videos about COVID-19 were produced with the help of other YouTube channels including Valuetainment, Jimmy Church, TradCatKnight, James English, Rob Moore, and Jeff Rense. The Southern Poverty Law Centre has described Rense as "the CEO of a hate radio empire" who "frequently hosts anti-Semites and Holocaust deniers on his own radio show, often endorsing their opinions."⁸¹ Together they allow Icke to access a further audience of 2.6 million followers, and help present Icke as an expert.

Icke's recent "Sabbatean Sabotage" video promoted his most antisemitic ideas and was produced in collaboration with a younger conspiracy theorist named Angela John Gage. While Gage only has a small following, Icke appears to see value in growing his network of collaborators and supporters worldwide.

"Recyclers" turn Icke's conspiracies into motivational speeches for 9.8 million people

Several other accounts regularly share content created by Icke or his collaborators. On YouTube, channels

named Attract Passion, Be Inspired, Inspire Discipline, Manifest Yourself, Success Archive and Video Advice with 9.8 million followers have repackaged Icke's conspiracy monologues as motivational speeches that have received 3.2 million views and over 93,000 Facebook engagements.

Icke's videos are also popular with Instagram influencers who promote conspiracy content. Rizza Islam, a member of the antisemitic Nation of Islam sect with 416,000 followers, shared one of Icke's videos to claim that the coronavirus outbreak was part of a plan to depopulate the world. The post received 227,000 views.⁸² While Icke rarely posts on Instagram, he is regularly tagged by other users who repost videos and memes that he and his collaborators originally produced.



Icke's business model is made possible by tech giants

David Icke's following of over 2 million people could be worth up to \$23.8 million in annual revenue for tech giants.

This income is primarily generated by advertisers seeking to reach Icke's fans, but also includes the money Icke and his misinformation network spend on ads to reach a wider audience.

This estimate is derived from publicly available figures for revenue social media platforms make per impression, or per user where that information is not available. It represents the best possible estimate of Icke's value to social networks in terms of engaging users and generating ad impressions.

This is a mutually beneficial arrangement: because Icke is largely absent from television, social media represents Icke's main opportunity to advertise his website, books and speaking tours to a wide audience. On Icke's most favoured platform, YouTube, he will also be receiving a significant share of the ad revenue generated by his videos.

Icke's presence on major social media platforms has helped make his website one of the 1,000 most popular in the UK, well ahead of the Labour Party which ranks at 7,214 or the Guido Fawkes political blog at 5,493. Icke extracts value from website visits serving adverts from sponsors, and selling books, health supplements and tickets to his speaking tours.⁸³

Recently Icke has established "Ickonic", his own video streaming platform costing £99 a year to access. Branding for Ickonic features in Icke's videos on COVID-19.

YouTube

They get up to \$145,000 in ad revenue

Icke gets up to \$192,000 in ad revenue

Icke's YouTube videos could be generating up to \$322,000 in annual ad revenue, according to the average number of views on his recent videos and available information on the typical rates paid by YouTube advertisers.⁸⁴

YouTube is known to split this ad revenue between itself and content creators, giving them a 55 percent share while keeping the remaining 45 percent.⁸⁵ This model means that Icke could earn up to \$177,000 a year from adverts on his YouTube videos, while YouTube earns \$145,000.

While YouTube now appears to have stopped placing adverts on Icke's channel, they were still appearing on his videos about coronavirus as late as 5 April.

Icke circumvents any restrictions on advertising imposed by YouTube by arranging his own sponsorship deals with brands who pay for promotions inserted at the start of his videos, with a link to the sponsor's website in the video description. A document on Icke's website reveals that these adverts cost \$1,300 per month, potentially earning him up to \$15,600 a year.

The sponsor featured in most of Icke's coronavirus videos is "No Hype Invest", a trading name of Capitalist Exploits: a Singapore-based "fund management service" with "an emphasis on the effects of the COVID-19 triggered financial crisis."⁸⁶

Users who subscribed to No Hype Invest after viewing Icke's adverts are now

being bombarded with marketing emails that play into conspiracy theories, claiming “[t]hey have locked us in, about a fake virus that probably not even exist... and while we are locked in they are installing 5G antennas all over the place.”⁸⁷

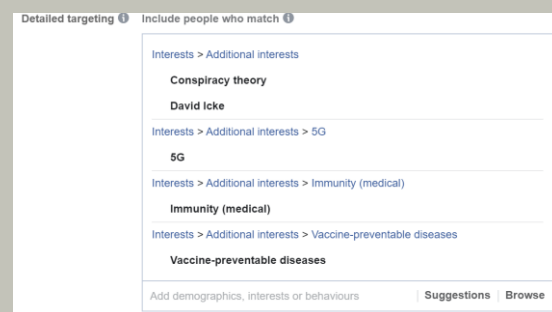
Facebook and Instagram They get up to \$23.2m in revenue from Icke’s audience

Icke gets 906,000 followers to whom he can sell products

Icke’s audience of 791,000 followers on Facebook and on 115,000 on Instagram be earning Facebook up to \$23.2 million in revenue. This figure is based on Facebook’s own key metric of Average Revenue Per Person (ARPP), which stood at \$25.57 in 2019 according to the company’s last annual report.⁸⁸

Icke’s primary value to Facebook is in engaging users who are subsequently served adverts. In the absence of publicly available data on the precise number of ad impressions that Icke generates, this ARPU figure gives the best possible estimate of the value of Icke’s audience to Facebook.

Facebook is known help advertisers target its users by categorising them according to their interests as revealed by the pages and posts that they engage with. Analysis of Facebook’s advertising platform shows that not only does it allow advertisers to target users who have liked Icke’s page, but it also allows them to target users with interests that could be linked to Icke’s misinformation including “conspiracy theory”, “5G” and “immunity (medical)”.



Facebook also earns revenue from adverts placed directly by Icke and his misinformation network. Facebook Ad Library shows that Icke has been running adverts for his upcoming speaking tour since January, while London Real has placed 59 adverts aimed at expanding its Facebook following and promoting business courses sold by the channel’s founder, Brian Rose. Facebook does not reveal how much was spent on these adverts.⁸⁹

Twitter

They get up to \$767,000 in revenue from Icke’s audience

Icke gets 284,000 followers to whom he can sell products

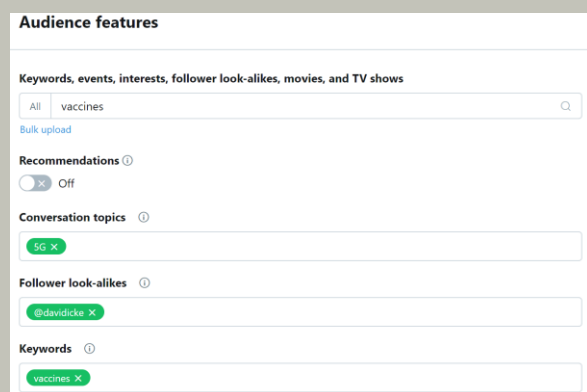
Icke’s Twitter audience of 281,000 followers could be earning Twitter up to \$749,000 in revenue. This figure is based on Twitter’s own key metric of “monetizable Daily Active Users” (mDAUs) who are served adverts on the platform.

Twitter had 152 million mDAUs according to the company’s last annual report for 2019, compared to a reported 1.3 billion accounts in total.⁹⁰ Using these figures, it is possible to estimate that 33,306 of Icke’s 284,855 followers are mDAUs who generate revenue for the platform. Icke’s share of Twitter’s mDAUs would be equivalent to a \$766,917 share of Twitter’s \$3.5 billion revenues in 2019.

As with Facebook, Icke’s primary value to Twitter is in engaging users who are

subsequently served adverts. In the absence of publicly available data on the precise number of ad impressions that Icke generates, this is the best possible estimate of the value of Icke's audience to Twitter.

Twitter allows advertisers to target users who are similar to David Icke's existing followers, as well as users engaging with content about 5G or vaccines.



Audience features

Keywords, events, interests, follower look-alikes, movies, and TV shows

All vaccines

Bulk upload

Recommendations 

☐ Off

Conversation topics 

5G

Follower look-alikes 

@davidicke

Keywords 

vaccines

Amazon

They get revenue from Icke's books and videos

Icke gets royalties from books and videos

Amazon offers a number of Icke's books for sale on Kindle, including the book *Human Race Get Off Your Knees* in which Icke claims that vaccines are designed to destroy the immune system and that climate change is a "fantasy".⁹¹ On Amazon's Kindle platform, Icke's books join countless other antisemitic works, including multiple editions of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁹²

Icke's 2018 book *Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told* is available on Amazon as a Kindle edition and ranked as high as 50 in the retail giant's chart of bestselling "Political Science" titles in April 2020. The book repeats Icke's claim that "Rothschild Zionists" manipulate world events and

criticises Germany's ban on Holocaust denial as "an expression of fascism".⁹³

Amazon itself offers virtually all of Icke's books in print editions, with copies of Icke's deeply antisemitic book *...And The Truth Shall Set You Free* in which he claims Hitler was an agent of Zionism on sale for £16.⁹⁴

Amazon Video also offers a four-part version of Icke's ten-hour Wembley Arena lecture in which he states that "the Rothschilds are the controllers of Israel and the controllers of the USA" and claims Bill Gates plans to use vaccines to depopulate the world. Each part of the lecture is priced at £4.99 to rent or £9.99 to buy, but is offered free to Amazon Prime members.⁹⁵ Amazon also offers the film, *Renegade: The Life Story of David Icke* at £4.49 to rent and £7.99 to buy.



Gaia

They get subscription fees

Icke gets royalties from videos

Gaia is a Netflix-style streaming service offering documentaries about alternative medicine, conspiracy theories and the new age lifestyle. Founded in 1988 by Kirka Rysavy, it now has several corporate investors, including Fidelity Investments, MIC Capital Partners and BlackRock.⁹⁶

The platform offers subscribers several documentaries and interviews featuring Icke, including ten episodes of the Richie Allen show, which is notorious for hosting antisemites and Holocaust

deniers. One interview available to stream on Gaia's website features graphic antisemitic imagery associating "Rothschild Zionism" with paedophilia,⁹⁷ while in another, Icke states that "climate change is one of the most monumental, blatant lies"⁹⁸ and claims that vaccinations are "destroying the human immune system".⁹⁹

YouTube regularly places Google ads promoting Gaia on Icke's videos, and the adverts themselves feature narration from Icke. A package of shows offered by Gaia is also available for purchase on Amazon Prime.¹⁰⁰



Apple TV and iTunes

Like Amazon, Apple offers Icke's biographical film *Renegade: The Life Story of David Icke* at £5.49 to rent and £9.99 to buy.¹⁰¹ Its iTunes store also offers a number of Icke's books including *The Robots' Rebellion*¹⁰² which contains his claim that the US Government deliberately used a hepatitis vaccine study to infect "young, white male homosexuals" with AIDS.¹⁰³

Deplatforming works

Deplatforming has been proven to work. A recent report from the charity Hope Not Hate showed that deplatforming hate actors had severely reduced their online followings along with their ability to organise and raise funding.¹⁰⁴

The same solution can work against David Icke. Without access to mainstream social networks, he loses valuable sources of revenue and the rapid growth in his following is brought to a halt. The complex network of misinformation he supplies content to will dry up, stemming the flow of new conspiracy theories.

Case studies show that deplatforming is the right solution

Alex Jones

Alex Jones, the owner of InfoWars, has championed Icke's conspiracy theories about the coronavirus. Jones and his InfoWars channel were removed from major social networks in 2018, vastly reducing his reach and traffic. Jones now appears to rely on other conspiracy theorists who have not yet been deplatformed, including Icke, to reach a wider audience.

Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson)

Hope Not Hate found that forcing Yaxley-Lennon from mainstream social media platforms had reduced his following from more than a million to just 42,000 on Telegram, an encrypted

messaging app used by many members of the far-right.

Whereas Yaxley-Lennon attracted more than 10,000 supporters to demonstrations against his incarceration for contempt of court in London in 2018, similar demonstrations after his bans have attracted just a few hundred.

Britain First

Research by Hope Not Hate shows that the removal of Britain First from Facebook, where it had 1.8 million followers, has successfully disrupted the group. The extremist group has now been forced to the small and marginal Gab platform, where it has just 11,000 followers, and Telegram, where it has 8,000.

Banning videos piecemeal does not work

There is already evidence that banning videos on a piecemeal basis does not work and may in fact be counterproductive.

YouTube took this approach in early April when it banned just some of Icke's videos on 5G in early April. This move left Icke and his misinformation network intact, allowing them to launch a recruitment drive that attracted over 350,000 followers in a week and formed the basis of crowdfunder on the London Real website that claims to have raised over \$500,000.¹⁰⁵ Both Icke and his network have continued to post videos that break guidelines on COVID-19 content.

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Note on statistics: All social media statistics used in this report are available as a separate file on the Center for Countering Digital Hate website.

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