

## Book Review

Alina Bârgăoanu

*Fake news. Noua cursă a înarmării*

București: Evrika Publishing, 2018

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Alina Bârgăoanu writes about a relevant contemporary issue: fake news, false news, disinformation 2.0, digital disorders. In a recent article published in *Science* fake news was defined as *fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent. Fake-news outlets, in turn, lack the news media's editorial norms and processes for ensuring the accuracy and credibility of information. Fake news overlaps with other information disorders, such as misinformation (false or misleading information) and disinformation (false information that is purposely spread to deceive people).* (Lazer et al., 2018, 1094). Fake news is not a new phenomenon; this notion was already present in the dictionaries in Great Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. What is new? What makes this issue so relevant nowadays? It is the form and the dissemination that is new. Fake news looks much like authentic information. Propaganda, lies, rumors have new dimensions nowadays because of the new Internet-based technologies, because of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google and Co. Social inequalities, the insecurity and frustration felt in the aftermath of the economic crisis make fertile soil for extreme views that are the playground of fake news.

Alina Bârgăoanu is the author of several relevant books in the field of communication science, which I have read and quoted over the last years. This book is something different and it is not only a question of style even if it is written in a "journalistic style", as the author puts it. The present book caters to different categories of readers, ranging from media experts to students of communication. It is also accessible to a broad category of public that is interested in the topic of



fake news. Bârgăoanu wrote the book out of a motherly concern for the future of her daughter and her generation in a world full of (dis)informational challenges.

The author started her journey in the issue of fake news by writing a creative autobiography that presents her life from the point of view of the media user. It is a journey from a childhood with a black-and-white TV to the complexity of today's hybrid media system. This autobiography is a genuine piece of oral history that presents a life-changing situation, one that is relevant for the whole generation X of Eastern Europeans.

The book shares an interdisciplinary perspective and the main assumption of the present work is that the huge phenomenon of information disorders and fake news should be analyzed in the larger context of the changes taking place in our society, in the larger context of international relations, European studies etc. Among the problems of the contemporary world that Alina Bârgăoanu analyzed with respect to the communication phenomenon we mention: Brexit, the rise in the intensity of China and Russia's interfering in the internal affairs of several Western countries, the so-called Transatlantic deficit, etc.

The context means not only politics but also the rise of new technologies. They are intensifying the polarization of the contemporary society with hyper winners and hyper losers, with the digital rich and the digital poor. The digital revolution or industrial revolution 4.0 is changing political organization forms, social order, human relations and religion, etc. Artificial intelligence and its effects on humanity are still at the beginning, but have to be in our focus. Science fiction has become science facts, a lot of new professions and technologies are now making things possible that years ago were far away in our imagination. New professions have emerged and old ones have been fundamentally transformed by technology. Niel Postman's view (1993) that technologies are strengthening inequalities and the benefits of the changes are not equally distributed is shared by the author. The theory of center and peripheries has a new digital dimension. Algorithms are the new masters of society, *they create trends, cultural values and consumption; those are distributed, filtered and ranked by likes on Facebook and Instagram, by hashtags on Facebook and Twitter and by the search results on Google* (our translation, Bârgăoanu, 2018, 120)

Years before the success of the social network platforms, in 2005, Ralph Keyes described our time as being the post-truth era, a time when facts are superior to the truth (Kavanagh, Rich, 2018). Some authors even emphasized the idea that humans are a post-truth species. The cultural relativism of the post-modern society, the idea that there is not a single objective truth, but several truths, has contributed to the contemporary perspective of truth as an identity confirmation.

The book is abundant in famous examples of the recent years. No one is immune to the fake news or digital destruction weapons that are doing well in a polarized, irrational world. In terms of political views, the middle is more and

more empty, reason is not going viral, negative emotions are digitally multiplied. The contemporary world is facing a challenging situation, as one cannot rely on the fact that there has always been fake news in human history. In the last pages of her book Alina Bârgăoanu is proposing solutions. Not only the often-mentioned fact check, consistent media education, but also an emotional maturity can be the key to dealing with fake news in the future. The platforms also have to contribute to an improvement in the quality of the information that is disseminated (Lazer *et al.*, 2018).

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