

Session 19 – Fake News: Traditional Media Against New Networks?

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The media in the first sense of the word are intermediaries. Their legitimacy is based on legal, ethical or moral bases, and it is on the basis of these principles that a true media is defined.

We note that regularly the audience and the revenues of the so-called traditional media: press, television and radio, are increasingly eroded by the major digital actors with the diffusion of the Internet networks. We now live in the world of digital meta-media whose characteristics are overcoming and interconnectivity. These new media constantly send data to each other, register our professions, our activities, our travels... This changes their function and role in relation to traditional media.

In recent years, all media have been regularly contaminated with fake news, and we live in an environment of widespread loss of confidence in the means of communication. The downside of this world is that idiots, according to Bertrand Russell, are sure of what they say while sensible people are full of doubts.

It should be noted that the term fake news is not simply the expression “false information”, fake is not false in the English sense. The term fake is more complex, it includes a notion of manipulation, of falsehood constructed for the purpose of deceiving. The commission for the enrichment of the French language proposed a more appropriate term “infox”, that is to say info and intox.

This situation is not new. Since the 16th century the Dutch philosopher Erasmus considered that for man lies have a hundred times more grip than the truth. It strangely echoes the situation we are facing today.

Every day, more than four billion pieces of content are shared and exchanged on social networks, indiscriminately mixing info and intox. Admittedly, the spread of false information is as old as journalism, but a new phenomenon arose with the Internet due to the rapidity of the spread which makes the effectiveness of the walls against lies played by traditional media more complex.

Social networks easily bypass traditional journalism, since anyone can publish anything, even if that information is biased, inaccurate or made up. Moreover, the speed of dissemination is becoming the norm and according to the work of MIT the truth takes six times longer than false information to reach individuals.