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**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON *SOCIAL IMPACT AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE ERA OF PROPAGANDA, FAKE NEWS AND MEDIA MANIPULATION*, 5-6 DECEMBER 2019**

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5-6 DECEMBER 2019**

Ioana Ramia<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract**

Between 5 and 6 December 2019 the International Symposium “Social impact and the social sciences: Theory and practice in the era of propaganda, fake news and media manipulation” was held at the University of Bucharest. Parallel sessions were held throughout the two days, canvassing a range of important contemporary issues in the advancement of social impact. These included: the role of theory in analysing impact in the context of political propaganda; the challenges of online and offline strategies to tackle fake news and media manipulation; and the importance of evidence-based social impact programs in and for organisations in the government and non-profit sectors. Some discussions focused on regional issues, including the Black Sea area and the EU. Others focused on country-specific interventions with social impact. Additional presenters debated issues on fake news, media manipulation and social impact at the trans-national and global levels. In concluding the conference, Professor Marian Zulean and Dr Gaby Ramia, two of the conference organisers, announced that a conference discussing social issues in the Black Sea region is likely to be organised in May 2020, and the 2020 iteration of the conference will be organised for the Fall in 2020.

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Between 5 and 6 December 2019 the International Symposium “Social impact and the social sciences: Theory and practice in the era of propaganda, fake news and media manipulation” was held at the University of Bucharest. It was organised by ICUB (the Research Institute of the University of Bucharest) with sponsorship from Regio (Programul Operational Regional Bucuresti-Ilfov) and Agentia pentru Dezvoltare Regionala Bucuresti-Ilfov. The event was well-attended, with national and international speakers and delegates. The keynote speakers were highly energetic in their engagement with the audience. The first plenary, Dr Tina Haux of University of Kent in the UK, discussed the impact of academic work on social policy and society. Dr Corneliu Bjola of the University of Oxford discussed online anti-semitism in the current socio-political context. Mr Per Enerud from the EU’s European External Action Service spoke on the efforts of the EU in combatting disinformation and protecting democracy. The fourth keynote speaker, Professor Liz Lightfoot of University of Minnesota in the US, wrapped up the conference with an insightful and practical discussion of social impact for doctoral candidates and their supervisors and advisers.

Parallel sessions were held throughout the two days, canvassing a range of important contemporary issues in the advancement of social impact. These included: the role of theory in analysing impact in the context of political propaganda; the challenges of online and offline strategies to tackle fake news and media manipulation; and the importance of evidence-based social impact programs in and for organisations in the government and non-profit sectors. Some discussions focused on regional issues, including the Black Sea area and the EU. Others focused on country-specific interventions with social impact, in the context of Romania, the UK and Australia. Additional presenters debated issues on fake news, media manipulation and social impact at the trans-national and global levels. In concluding the conference, Professor Marian Zulean and Dr Gaby Ramia, two of the conference organisers, announced that a conference discussing social issues in the Black Sea region is likely to be organised in May 2020, and the 2020 iteration of the conference will be organised for the Fall in 2020. The prospect of edited scholarly volumes stemming from each of these events will be discussed in 2020. Further information about the conference as well as the program are available at <https://icub.unibuc.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/SOCIAL-IMPACT-CONFERENCE-PROGRAMME-FINAL.pdf>.