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# The Dictatorship of Democracy or Democratic Dictatorship in the New Media

**Abstract.** Decentralization of media has its assumption of fulfillment on the Internet, the network of all networks. At the same time, eo ipso, a logical sequence is the democratization of society as a whole, if it is used as a general social tool, and not as a manipulative form of appearance. Culture of ideology or Ideology of the culture pervades through social networks as a double-edged sword of the game that involves the society aiming towards satisfaction of ideology, although not the culture within its own incidence. The absurdity that social network have corrupted the quality of a healthy society is in conflict with the assumptions of everyday life, because as it is no longer the basic question how technology changed our world, but which social need have been met through the use of modern technologies. Through three levels of understanding of the ideology of the media in this paper I will present that every ideology is imaginary distortion of the real conditions within the appearances of each of us. Exclusively and only because of its own, the current goals of manipulation, without the existence of strategic plans for the shaping of society as a whole but only for the group that supports a given ideology, through the ideological order, with the help of the Network, creates cultural awareness and not vice versa. The answer is in media literacy, first educators, and then all the other layers of society, regardless of ideology, race, ethnicity and/or gender. And through the Network, above all.

**Keywords:** decentralization, network, media, ideology, culture, media literacy

## Introduction

Can Network and digital media democratize our society within our own comprehensiveness?

The two most common answers to this question are:

The first is the tragic vision of the man who has been manipulated and who, instead of the legislator, becomes the instrument of technology, a victim of the imperatives of progress and media manipulation. It is believed that digital media and social networks will not democratize our society, but to mark the final defeat of the free man and the natural orders. There is a social consensus around the idea of the impact of technology (media, information) on contemporary society. The idea of autonomous technology, close to the *political left* and the *political right*, is fundamentally marked by technological determinism, or with the determinism of incidence. Today government's *ballistic metaphor or metaphor of shock* (Lévy, 2011, p. 30), which discursively form technology as a projectile (stone, shell or rocket) and culture, society and human as live targets. Resistance is futile, and the only thing we can do is to adapt to or be crushed under the wheels of history. Internet then seems to be particularly dangerous technology that instrumentalize human. It has been criticized virtualization (dematerialization of the communication and devaluation of physical space), manipulation with personal data which are resulting from the alleged chaotic structure of the Internet, erasing the boundaries between public and private, real and virtual. Social networks and new media are not observed as termination and change of media technologies, but final confirmation of the rule of mass media.

If the first response is pessimistic vision of the end of the history of media as we know, the second one is optimistic picture of the *overall connection and participation* (Hadžialić, 2013), it is considered as a tool for intervention in the real world and a powerful weapon in the process of empowering of the user. It is saluted for the *connection, collectivity and participation* (Thacker, 2006), as well as possibilities for the game identity or identities of production. Although postmodern age have been declared as the era of no confidence in the great stories (Jean-François Lyotard, 1988), the story of the Internet have been shaped as a new big story, or metanarration. This story begins with publicists (read: journalistic)

metaphors of Social networks as “electronic borders” or “information highway”, but also with scientific elaborations on the Social network as a space of the universality without totality. Postmodern philosophy too soon rejected the notion of universal, identifying it with totalitarianism. The Network, since the end of the eighties from the previous century appears as space of interconnections which does not allow any kind of totalitarianism. With the cyber-space, there is a new form of universality, *universality without totality* which includes all and allows the expression of human diversity (DIOGEN).

But the main problem with the first answer is a lack of understanding of structural features of Network<sup>1</sup> and digital media and the discussion on decentralized media as mass media.

The network is not mass media, yet distributed, horizontal medium that allows direct communication between any of the points - in other words, it is a media channel, surely by now the most democratic and most expanding form of interactive communication and participation “of everyone with everybody” within the real-time of the events. Criticism for the Network and digital media as autonomous pollutants of natural orders continues on the long tradition of criticism of the mass media as a tool for the instrumentalization of humans.

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia: Should Internet be written in capital or lowercase letter? The decision depends on the structure of the media, the difference between old and new media. The decision from the part of linguistic profession to have word Internet written in lowercase stems from a lack of understanding and treating the Internet as any other media and not as the communication channel. The Internet is the own Network name (“network of all networks”). Internet written with lowercase letter refers to any network that is formed by implementing of Internet Protocols. The decision to have noun written in lowercase letter is explained by the need to appoint a media, such as television, radio, and so on. But the Internet in this regard is not the media, to which admonish Ognjen Strpić (Strpić, Ognjen (2008) “The Internet is not a medium,” blog library 42, URL:<http://biblioteka42.blog.hr/2008/03/1624376343/internet-nijemedij.html>).

Serbia: [http://www.b92.net/tehnopolis/internet.php?nav\\_id=360458](http://www.b92.net/tehnopolis/internet.php?nav_id=360458): “In this country are still ongoing controversies about whether the noun Internet should be written with large or small letter. Supporters of capital letter are claiming that it is a unique technological invention to which, even through writing in a language, should give due recognition, although on the other hand, people from the profession, as well as linguists, note that this noun should be written in lowercase letter. Connection to a worldwide computer network is, in the developed world long time ago (with us slowly) becomes, equated with connection to electricity and water supply system.”

With the term Internet, here I use the term The Network, within the same meaning.

Era of Broadcasting transmission is associated with the image of passive consumers, the innocent victims of the hegemony of the mass media which often have been shown in caricature way, as too fatted persons with remote control in hand, whom lazily are changing programs.

## Culture of the Network and/or The Network of the Culture

Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1989) write about the uniformity of the products of cultural industries, standardization of consumption as a direct consequence of standardized industrial production. As consumer goods are produced on the bar, so the culture is also industrially produced, which makes it more not be an original, critical vision of reality, according to them.

The only role of culture, as well as all other industries, is to offer as many choices as possible, concealing the fact that all these selections are the fake ones. The mass media are unified systems for the production of the program. However, if the enthronement of mass media was a step from the communication towards an *authoritarian* presentation of viewers and listeners to the unified programs, then the Network is the revision of a process, a step in the other direction, towards the pure communication. Radio-amateurs are the one that still resists standardization.

The network was formed in the late eighties as a horizontal media and developing practices similar to radio-amateurism, horizontal communication of the subjects, where everyone can communicate with everybody, however, still Adorno and Horkheimer reject the culture of the above because the radio amateurs are always “organized from the top”. The Internet is just *one apparatus for answers* (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1989) that was missing for a radio that, despite the potential, gave up and has developed into a more of the one-way medium. In the essay “Radio as a means of communication” (Brecht, 1932, p. 15–17) has been indicated a warning that radio could be the best possible communication instrument of public life, when instead of broadcasting know how to receive, allow listeners to speak and not only to listen, if radio knew “how to lead the listener into a relationship, rather than isolate him/her, or, in other

words, when it would step out from the deal of purchase and engaged its listeners as suppliers.”

In the book *The Games of social communication* (Vlajki, 1984, p. 103) is about maintaining of the illusion in civil societies that adopts the reality of natural laws:

1. Through the institutional activity (especially considering indoctrinating effect of family and school);
2. Through the diffuse activity of layers, groups, classes, aiming towards groups and media audiences;
3. Through direct ways of opposing individuals against groups and vice versa.

The Network enables the implementation of a manipulative part of the above.

Today, critics of new media have not moved beyond criticism of *Big Brother society*, *Göbels galaxy* and similar simplifications that media represent a form of opium for the people. Instrumentalized human is commonplace of many indictments that inspires with *Technological Society* (Jacques Ellul, 1964), and the *Myth of the Machine* (Lewis Mumford, 1986), which condemns the technological imperative as “the most primitive taboo”.

But the most common criticism of the media continue through cultural studies known practice that is called (Hoggart, 1957) “access of plugged nose”. If such criticism at all look back to the difference between The Network and the mass media, then The Network is considered as a place of empty exhibitionism that for each entity provides *five minutes of fame*. At best case scenario, if the critics bother with the differences in the production of media content between the mass media and The Network, then is accented out narcissism of the entities who now use The Network as a forum of promoting of its own meaninglessness. Having in mind that The Network have decentralized production of the content, elitist criticism is now really within a difficult position. Namely, The Network is based on the general, universal connection (messages are associated/connected with other messages, and any other text/articles with other texts/articles), which brings us back to the community of pre-literary era, and which been waiting for so-called techno-optimists as it was McLuhan.

As it has been noted (McLuhan, 1964), the print media de-contextualized the messages, which need to be recovered back into the context – the situation of free two-way communication. With the cyber-space, according to many of McLuhan's successors, we can talk about the global village, a new quasi-tribal, holistic society. Due to the changed structure of the media, today the criticism of an instrumentalized human easily oppose with the utopian visions of digital media and The Network as interactive media of "culture of amateurs". The structure of the media fueled the optimistic assessment of The Network as universality without totality. Those who are optimistic about the democratic potentials of digital media and The Network are often the ones who are able to observe, in structural way, the media. To interpret hegemony in an era of decentralized media, it should be noted that the ideology is formed and practiced in a new way and in a new context. In the era of information capitalism, there has been a transformation of the cultural industries itself which is why digital media and network media are often seen as the materialization of the idea of openness, the implementation of individual freedom of so far underprivileged users of mass media. Media studies, despite the problems and epistemological impurity, very early warned to a specific blindness of the society, hypnosis of the media that comes from a lack of understanding for the importance of structure of technology. The medium is the message (McLuhan, 1964), which as aphoristic maxim, although open to various interpretations, is the necessary foundation of one material analysis of the media. This orientation often means entering the field of technical studies (computer and communication technologies). Although, media materialism is essential if we want to prevent relativism of the criticism of hegemony of media that equates the mass media and The Network.

## Media as a Symptom

One analogy of how allegedly Karl Marx (Jacques Lacan, 1980) invented *the symptom*, can be applied in order to make the important achievements of the project of Marshall McLuhan.

Although seemingly has nothing to do with the area of political economy and psychoanalysis, analysis of the structure of the media has a similar goal – a critique of *fetishism of the content*. Karl Marx tried to get into the secret of the commodity form (determination of the value of

goods by means of working time) through avoiding the illusion of commodity fetishism according to which the value of goods depends on a mere coincidence; After warning (Sigmund Freud, 1900) on the illusion of self-evident connection between the dream and the meaning of the dream; while from the other hand we have to reference towards the illusion of fetishism of media content (McLuhan, 1964), the conventional attitude towards the media actually gives an overview of the content. Today is no less necessary to repeat McLuhan's experiment, because the analysis of communication on social networks are not moved away from the elitist critics of meaningless Facebook statuses, devaluation of friendship, violence in games, and so on. Having in mind that we are mostly fascinated with the content, violence in computer games or trivial topics on social networks, the importance of the media remains hidden. Such an experiment of separation structure from its content is crucial for understanding the role of digital and network genres, communication practices and art forms. The importance of this inverse in understanding of the media have emphasized McLuhan's successor (Levinson, 1999), pointing to the banal fact that the phone is more important than the media messages that it broadcasts.

The problematic assumption of technological determinism (Thorstein Veblen, 1900), that media studies inherited from Marshall McLuhan, prevents understanding of other fields, and it is – the ideology of the media. For McLuhan and his successors message media simply represents its structure, and this structure is considered responsible for the transformation of society. For McLuhan (1964) cultural importance of media lies not in their content, but in the way, autonomously, in which are changing our view of the world. And thus, indirectly affect our understanding of the social environment in which we are living and working.

However, derivative *about the media who have changed our world*, actually have, as a matter of fact, somewhat suspicious meaning.

If there is a devaluation of friendship on social networks, or alienation of players of network games, maybe these phenomena are only social symptoms, not the outcomes of the impact of digital media and The Network. The same conclusion can be transferred also towards the optimistic interpretation. Sociological aspects of the impact of media of The Network are multi-layered and why we should not present these changes as, simply, an outstanding opportunity of the manipulation that

has received excellent chance just through The Network where extraordinary have been implemented a strategies of manipulation (Noam Chomsky, 2011; Sabahudin Hadžialić, 2015). Let's start with the fact that this popular phrase contemporary derivate of the understanding of the role of television, its *impact* on society in the second half of the twentieth century.

Against this idea opposed the idea of Raymond Williams (1974) in his study *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, to which he has allocated almost absurd task: Williams is suspected in the idea that "television has changed our world" (Williams, 1974, p. 1) and decided to dedicate criticism of the usual notion of the media as an agent of change, missiles affect the culture and change our world.

That kind of view separates technology from the society representing technological discoveries as self-generating and independent ones. Here we have warning on replacement of cause and consequence which is today also the fundamental problem for the interpretation of media. Although, everything in the human understanding of the media is just often placed upside down (an example of a TV soap operas, with the explanation that we "give to the people give what they want").

It is no longer a basic question of how technology changed our world, but which social need meet modern technologies satisfies. A poetic image illustrates the company of television in the family dramas of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's (APC), his characters spend their time at the window, waiting for news from *the outside*. That *listening* foreshadowed a new era and the need for new transmission apparatus of the ideology. Such a society is defined by two paradoxical, yet deeply related tendencies of modern industrial life: on the one hand with the mobility, and in the other hand with more apparent self-sufficiency of the family home. Like television, The Network is the product of society, new trends and changing of the societal conditions. The society of the mobile privatization (Williams, 1974), has not changed within two points – this society relies heavily on mobile individuals and self-sufficient homes. Although, the spacing of the central appliance, both in terms of space (computer does not have any more central place in the house) and in metaphorical meaning, the indicator is the decentralization of the power of ideological apparatus. The ideological apparatus is changed in two ways. More generally it is not any more about ideological apparatus of the state, but here now we have rule of the state-corporate apparatus. And second,

this apparatus is a truly world-view open, because it is driven by profit, not with culture, civilization, and that is why this apparatus needs less centralized communication system, but more decentralized system of the control of users-consumers.

### Three Levels of Media Ideology & Ideology of the Media

We still have a debate (Daniels, 2015)<sup>2</sup> about copyright issues and the status of free information. Although, insofar as we focus the interest towards the structure of media as a symptom of society it is possible to observe the dynamics that connects new media with ideology and negotiations about the meanings of the essential communication practices, modes and ways of political action, but also access to the means of production.

Today are actual three levels of understanding of the media ideology. The first is the understanding of the hegemony of the media as a result of the modernist project of technocracy, the rule of technology, media and information.

The second level is a little more complex, but is burdened with technological or economic determinism and that is, an understanding of society as a result of the impact of the structure of the media or the media as a result of economic relations. Within the technological and economic determinism the structure (production conditions, the structure of the media) is considered operating. Media, technology and information *affecting the culture* (content, conscience, values, actions). Such an interpretation is, however, complicated, because interpret ideology as the production of false consciousness, a result of the alienation that results from the very own conditions of production.

However, the third level of emancipation from the simple interpretation of the media as the production of false consciousness is the most complex because it means that ideology is interpreted as a constituent part of the structure of the feelings, a consensus between the ruling and subordinates (inferior ones), between users and corporations. The same question remains open and even within Marx and within McLuhan's stands, and about which warns other authors (Althusser, 1971, p. 127–

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<sup>2</sup> What is very evident through the attempt of mixing the world's largest force into the control of The Network-Internet, USA.

194) revising determinism of the base. It is easy to accuse the “priests” and “despots” for the production of false consciousness, instilling ideas, values, beliefs and attitudes, warns Althusser.

It remains unclear why he did every ideology is imaginary distortion of the actual conditions. Compare only assumptions of the promises presented just prior each election within the region of the Western Balkans – using the media towards realized promises after the end of the mandate. The average of realized promises is around 10% (from the proclaimed until the realized promises) – what is it then the confirmation of the above mentioned words.

Understanding of the structure of the media/fetishism of the commodity, still does not answer the question why the media (read, in this case: The Network) forms its entities in a certain way. The popular media critique should be avoided the as an empty space of The Network exhibitionism. In this interpretation, the creators of digital media and online services are held accountable for the devaluation of communication in the material space, illusionism of computer games or commercialization of The Network. The mission of modern manipulators is affined to the missions of their critics.

Both would like to *make the world open*? On Facebook profile of Mark Zuckerberg during some time period was written: “I try to make the world more open, helping people to connect among each other and share.” People are really using Facebook to connect. How is it possible to say that, and can we conclude that *the media manipulate*?

The Network is a culture, a battleground where negotiations are taking place between dominant and subordinate groups, and the result of these negotiations is uncertain. To understand the paradox of a culture of open media, it is important to insist on the significance of Culture as a battlefield. At the same time we have a personalities (especially if those personalities speak and write several languages) that want to dominate the presentation of information which are they presenting to others. It is up to others to respond, accept or reject mentioned. How will they do it, certainly depends on, first on the factors that are directed towards skills of using The Network (especially Social networks, today in 2016) and knowledge about concrete moves of “other” side, whether it is about trivialized information about traffic offense which was attended by both sides and/or ideological issue of conflict of the political left with the

political right option during which, at the same time, they attend and discuss about mentioned above.

Looking at the distributed media I cannot talk about totalitarianism of media as spokesman of ideas of the ruling class. This is not only because the very structure of the media does not allow totalitarian voices. Although it seems that this is the merit of the media, distributed media of The Network, as a matter of fact, not even within the systems of mass media we cannot observe ideology of media simply as a victory of the ruling ideology.

It has always been the ideology *a specific form of linguistic ventriloquism* (Hall, 1981, p. 227–240) through which, in the discourse of the dominant culture, encodes also an authentic language of the subordinates. By that is indeed more language of print media, popular journalism infused with some elements of directness and vivid specificity of the language of the working class. There is always the *answer to the question of who is speaking subject* more complex than it at first appears. The ruling ideology has never been able to transform the popular elements, but will not go so far even it attempts such a thing. For journalism that mean the transformation of authentic speech into a kind stereotyped, ready-made and neutralized popular populism, while it is for Facebook transformation of authentic practices of free connection between two points in The Network.

## **Ideological Order as a Prerequisite for Ideological Cultural Consciousness and Not Vice Versa**

Take the examples of the culture of communication and relationship between the media and culture by comparing the Arab Spring and the current problems with the so-called Islamic State (<http://www.clarion-project.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq>) using The Network to promote the goals and getting mass public on our side. On the one hand we have a legitimate desire for change dictatorial regimes during the Arab Spring that began in Tunisia at the end of 2010 and expand to North Africa and the Middle East which has, time showed, five years later, more or less been manipulated form of desire from world powers aimed at taking over of the control of natural resources (oil,

primarily), while on the other hand, there was a creation of crazy intentions to project Islam as the only possible solution for the whole world. How? Using of, exactly, contradictory technologies about which nothing is written in the holy book (Holly Quran) for which fake Muslims pray, but who stress that their truth is the only real truth, and in other words that all those who are not with them will get the punishment from Allah.

Culture of media and media culture here has got its skew shape using symptoms exactly as examples of manipulation to satisfy the realization of certain ideologies and winning over supporters for that.

All those who attack symptom of The Network as a medium that enables the development of decadent forms of consciousness, no matter if it comes from the West and/or East, forget the fact that the current ideological order<sup>3</sup> just allow the survival of this or that form of ideological cultural consciousness and not *vice versa*.

In front of us is also a warning (Miroslav Radman, 2010) of the possibility that Internet convert us into obedient ants referring to the collective consciousness that uncritically digest *toxic* information: "When we compare the process of introduction of food in the digestive tract and the process of entering information into the brain, it is evident that evolution spent much more time 'working' on nourishment than on information and learning", wrote Radman. Luddites are today considered technophobes and skeptics, opponents of technological development and trust in the technological scientific paradigm.

How is it possible that the critics of the media of quite different political orientation agree on the nature of social problems as problems of totalitarianism of the media? In the Western Balkans we have political

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<sup>3</sup> Luddite movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century: [https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radni%C4%8Dki\\_pokreti](https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radni%C4%8Dki_pokreti) "Luddite movement – England, named after Ned Ludd – the leader. Luddites considered machines guilty for the mass unemployment which has been developed during and after the first industrial revolution. In a massive they fought against capitalistic entrepreneurs in a way that they destroyed machines from the 1811 to 1816, destroyed the factory building and set fires in warehouses. In 1812 a law was passed against the Luddites that their acts are punished by death, so that in the next few years it has been executed the entire group of workers. Over time, the working class realized that the cause of her miserable position is not in machinery, but in its capitalist application of it, and therefore its activity have been directed towards the fight against capitalist social relations."

left, but also a political right who accuses The Network for the current state of mind and behavior.

The consensus is created by transferring responsibility to an abstract otherness; Facebook is to be blamed for divorces, poor learning of the students, disobedience in the home, nourishment with unhealthy food, and so on. The Technology of the media are accused that violates the culture of their own nation (read: ideology) and destroys healthy society<sup>4</sup> and shaped moral and ethical standards of behavior and living.

One of the greatest living philosopher of today's world (Slavoj Žizek, 1989), when he was speaking about fetishism, which I have previously stated, said something very specific. In fact, it is common that the fetishists are the dreamers who are lost in their own private world, but for Žizek, they are realists, persons able to accept things as they are, since they have their fetish for which they can catch in order to mitigate the effect of reality. *Eo ipso*, for technophobes nature serves as a fetish that makes them healthy, functional individuals because they can still act in a technological world.

## Conclusions

The logical conclusion is aimed towards the creation of a healthy society, but society directed to the common good through the individual doing, observing three cultures of The Networks: the idea of free information, the acceptance of a culture of resistance as critical observations of ideological matrices which are directed towards manipulation, regardless of whether they come from the political left or political right and as The Network as a tool for life management of "mere mortals".

At the same time, direct the work towards the education of educators for the benefit of society as a whole with further education of the population, starting from primary school, and continue further. Media literacy is the answer, but only that kind of media literacy that will critique of all deviations within the social reality will see as an opportunity for improvement of the same reality, and not for the creation of new conflicts among the creators of the current reality.

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<sup>4</sup> Whatever does it mean at the area of Western Balkan which for almost twenty five years laments within the putridity of nationalism, corruption and hypocrisy.

And, finally, to become media literate person on the following way:

- Reading through the media, rather than with them;
- Trying to see what is behind the scene, because whoever tells stories about conspiracy is the one who creates it;
- Understanding that all humans are red under the skin, regardless if they are representatives of this or that ideology or mere mortals, whom, in fact, we all are.

The Network is here as a media channel that can be manipulatively inspiring or inspiring inspirational manipulatively only if used for common, harmonized well-being, respecting the ethical standards of own appearances within the international, common objectives directed towards the existence and development of mankind, because *good gives good* in the long run. Short-lived are exclusively the owners of the rights on truth – the truth within The Network can be only one – based on media literacy which is handed over the right for the creators, individuals within the totality called the society that, through the “reading” of the presented, only seemingly conflicting truth (and in fact very much connected lies with the aim of maintaining a joint maintenance one and/or other side on the surface of reality) to create the *reality of the good society* which will within the diversity in the immediate understand the benefits of close neighborhood as advantages upgrading their own being, and through that society as a whole, regardless of ideology, race, ethnicity and/or gender. Through The Network, above all.

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