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**Jelena Gaković (auth.). Društvena arhitektonika digitalnog doba (Social Architectonics of the Digital Age). Sarajevo: Academia Analytica, 2023, p.151.**

**Nijaz Ibrulj** <sup>1</sup>

Social and cultural criticism which is given through conceptual analyses is a very risky business, especially when it is done by insider, by someone with knowledge of practices and strategies that society prefers and culture verifies (willingly or not). Someone who has the ability to deal with the most important and urgent area of research in the social sciences today, in the age which produces millennial trauma for the generations that are "obsolescent for the new contexts" and at the same time a millennial opportunity for the contexts-dependent generations yet to come...

Dr. Jelena Gakovic, professor at the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy (University of Sarajevo), is an author with a rare ability to harmonize practical skills and conceptual intelligence in the field of information and communication practices based on media and technologies, the role of which social sciences have to deal with. Her author's book *Društvena arhitektonika digitalnog doba / Social Architectonics of the Digital Age* (Sarajevo, Academia analytica, 2023) clearly testifies to the high scientific culture of a critical approach to a topic that is seemingly distant from the old topics of classical sociology that are related to the industrial age; the research of power, political communication, the role of media and means of communication, is always

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<sup>1</sup> N.Ibrulj  
University of Sarajevo-Faculty of Philosophy  
Franje Rackog 1, 71000 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Email: [nijaz.ibrulj@ff.unsa.ba](mailto:nijaz.ibrulj@ff.unsa.ba)

relevant, especially in an age that is "infected" and completely determined by information and communication technologies.

It is clear from the very title of the book that the author deals with the ambient of intelligent space that itself belongs to the knowledge-based society. These are two very sophisticated vectors of social ontology and social epistemology, each of which produces numerous aspects because they work interactively and connected through all sectors of the real and virtual world.

Namely, the sociology of communication itself is determined by permanent modernization, which constantly advances in time and space, because communication technology is developed and used at such a speed that technological metabolism is noticed immediately due to the simultaneity of drastic changes in the structures of society. The paradox of digital age lies precisely in the fact that these drastic changes are so quickly and massively accepted and become part of social behavior and collective intentionality that they are treated as a "normal development" ("progress", "prosperity", "improvement") of the context and the age to which they belong. And it looks like the phenomena that populate that "normal context" are self-understanding! But self-understanding is always the reason for philosophical and sociological doubts about the substantiality of phenomena that thus occupy time and space in our environment.

The author Jelena Gakovic has very successfully and with a lot of knowledge shown that investigating the transfer of ideas in modern democratic societies and societies in transition through the direct and indirect influence of media and information technologies means investigating intermediaries between owners of ideas, owners of information and communication technology, owners of media, and "owners of opinions" that are constituted in this circular and perverted relationship to information. Technology and the process of *mediatization of all sectors of social ontology* has become an institution in itself that has the *ecclesiastical power of media* and technology corporations that have networked society without allowing it to become "obsolete" or archaic except in museum spaces and non-technical cultural oases located in non-governmental sector. Political communication is effective as much as it animates social groups to follow it, to comment on it...to be present in the virtual online space.

Living in such an age that turns the whole society into "screen watchers", in an age that at every moment leaves behind those who cannot keep up with the new knowledge of that time, shocks the speed of changes that the new age brings.

Technology that spreads innovation at the speed of light and has a global impact on life as such has no time for history... it is much more important to discover applicative ideas that come from the future because the present must be new and modern! Historians are prophets of what happened, of what was, but the history of the future, which as a method must use the projective semantics of social relations, can simultaneously produce concern and hope. The future, however, always shocks because of the possibilities it possesses, which are revealed through the projective semantics of social phenomena.

Jelena Gaković very successfully and convincingly deals with mediatization as a special phenomenon in the social architectonics of the digital age, which creates a *Plug In Prometheus* from man, chained or connected to the screen, who should know everything, to be informed, and constantly bombarded with contradictory news from opposing media and opposing ideologies. Mediatization produces day by day an ambiguous reality, truth covered with lies and lies presented as truth, which produces new forms of barbarism and normativism. It became questionable whether the media transmit information at all or produce it as an ideological tool that supports the power of digital pharaohs who have political ambitions? The production of fake news has become the subject of legislation and measures of various state agencies that supposedly take care of eliminating hate speech, racist and discriminatory interpretations, and the personnel of these structures are appointed by opposite political parties.

There is a fear of technique and a fear of technology, and right now it is expressed as a fear of artificial intelligence, of the *smart substance* that K. Eric Drexler talked about and of the expansion of the ambient of intelligent space. *Future Shock*, a book written by Alvin Toffler in 1970 and which then spoke about modern technology, including information and digital technology and the social changes that the digital age will bring, pointed out the possibility that a person who does not change in a world that is changing quick changes become obsolete man! In fact, Alvin Toffler "sent the first shock-wave to the world of Western society" as a warning that the digital age is coming with new processes that cannot be avoided. "*Rapid obsolescence is an integral part of the entire accelerative process—a process involving not merely the life span of sparkplugs, but of whole societies. Bound up with the rise of science and the speed-up in the acquisition of knowledge, this historic process can hardly be attributed to the evil design of a few contemporary hucksters.*" (Toffler, *Future Shock*, 1970) Calculating only with what we can do today and in the future with artificial

intelligence, we are not always ready to see what artificial intelligence makes of ourselves!

Jelena Gakovic's research reveals *the architecture of that digital wave* that arrived in our city and made it a "smart city", on our park bench and made it a "smart bench", on our school blackboard and made it a "smart board" "... Things are getting smarter and people are getting dumber and more dependent on the memory that is outside of them in some device and on the application that they start with one finger! In our age, information and communication technology increases the power of corporate capital that controls the media and political communication every day. In this way, this digital wave facilitates the penetration of ideas that come to life in digital applications that stick not to android devices but to the people who use them.... The fact that someone owns *digital status function* as social status if and only if is "on Viber" or "on WhatsApp" or "on Instagram" or "on Facebook" or waiting "on FaceTime" or talking on "Twitter" is just another term for the *technofix* that humanity is enjoying globally in the digital age. The power of those who make *digital picture books* for *screen viewers* who only need an index finger all day turns users into *people with one finger* who can create or destroy their (virtual) life or someone else's (virtual) life with one click or touch, into those who can create or destroy the economy of a country or bring the entire world into an economic crisis or those who can send a squadron of smart kamikaze drones to the less smart cities of a neighboring country!

There is no doubt that every social age is determined by human intelligence, which he uses to solve problems and make decisions. Every social age has its architectonics of the mind that works in the production and regulation of life forms. Every architectonics of the mind is connected with techniques and instruments for the realization of solutions and decisions. The man always lives in the age of his instrumental intelligence, whether he uses bone like a hammer, stone, iron, copper, silicon microchip or nano-particles and digital information. The human mind is shaped by the instruments with which it works and produces its environment. And these instruments are a manifestation of collective consciousness and collective knowledge that does not exist until society exists. ... According to Don Ihde, there is no instrument that does not belong "to some set of culturally constituted values and processes" (*Don Ihde, Technology and the lifeworld. From Garden to Earth, 1990*)

So if we want to know something about ourselves, we need to know some facts about the architectonics of society in the age in which we live. If we define that age as the digital age, then it is necessary to ask: what is the social architectonics of the digital age, and what is the instrumental intelligence that uses collective intentionality when it creates the world of life forms and the world of social institutions that enable the production of institutional facts? The book *Društvena arhitektonika digitalnog doba (Social Architectonics of the Digital Age)* by Jelena Gakovic, published in Sarajevo by *Academia analitica* in 2023, contains all the socio-cultural instruments for recognizing the characteristics of an age that is called the digital age.

It is clear that by accepting new instruments for solving old problems and for making decisions in different life practices, the set of socio-cultural relations from which and for which these instruments were created is also accepted. We can agree with Don Ihde that these are "relations that create a situation of dependence" on the accepted culture of an age (*Ibid.*, p.126). The paradox of the speed of global or mass acceptance of changes in the digital world of technology is demonstrated by the consumer hysteria called *Black Friday*. For generations that are dependent on *technofixes* and the power they get in political communication through the use of the media, the future shock lasts very short, in fact it is part of *ontological immunity* that simply works by adapting to the constant repetition of *new* and *new* and *new* products or product models.

Jelena Gakovic enters into the consideration of the phenomenon of the digital age in a very knowledgeable way and expands the research into a network of terms, some of which seem to be on the periphery of the term "digital". These are very careful analyzes of political communication, and what is even more important, it enters the field of discourse context, which in that communication is shown not only as a set of social variables, but also as a *cognitive content* that is introduced into communication intentionally as a reason for acting *through the media* and through technologies. This approach of the author Jelena Gakovic brings her exceptional work into the realm of critical discourse analysis concepts in the context of ideas that are mediatized and then act as forms of techno-social fixations that appear as if they are objective facts because they are present in the media, on the web, online, in database, accessible, visible, supposedly belong to an open source installation that is thus epistemologically objective in itself and, due to its media presence, ontologically objective. Analyzing this as if the production of facts that twists the subjective power of the owners of the means of communication into "objective and true social reality" is a great and significant

undertaking, which the author of the book entered into by relying on the most important thinkers of social ontology such as Giddens, Keucheyan, Nash, Beck, Ziima, Jameson, Castells, Touraine, Bell, and many others.

The analysis of *the contextual conditions of political communication* is also the analysis of the social context, which is always the context of power, the context of ideologies and the context of technologies for the realization of power. According to Teun Van Dijk (*Discourse and Context: A sociocognitive approach*, 2008, vii) "*Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is crucially interested in the social conditions of discourse, and specifically in questions of power and power abuse, but has also failed to develop more explicit theories of context as a foundation for its own critical enterprise. Obviously, power is not shown just in some of the aspects of "powerful speech," and we need insight into the whole, complex context in order to know how power is related to text and talk, and more generally how discourse reproduces social structure*".

As she states in the book, Jelena Gakovic analyses "*structural consequences and influences of new information and communication technologies on economy, politics and culture in contemporary society with particular focus on political communication.*" Her argument is simple: changes in the social architecture of the digital age are compatible and interrelated with the rapid developments of information and communication technologies, including new media. That's why the author observes and evaluates the media primarily as instruments of social transformations, changes in politics, communication and democratic processes in society. The research of this kind of phenomenon requires in itself an interdisciplinary approach that receives inputs from sociological insights into social and political ontology that are mediated by means of modern information and communication technology.

Nevertheless, it is good to take from the author of the book the provision of her basic idea from which she sends sociological input to other disciplines and areas of research: "*The main idea of our research is that media have significant implications for legitimacy of socio-political orders. Supporting arguments discussed in the book deal with the media's subjection to economic functionality and capitalistic business matrix in the process of globalization, media's colonization of the political field where they impose the logic of representation inherent to the marketing strategies preoccupied with image, rather than effective political agency making the marginal -central and the public – private. Moreover, media as counterbalance to governing power structures working in the interest of*

*citizens, despite its great potential, fail to fulfil its watch-dog role because of economic and structural operational conditions. It is furthermore argued that majority of the media locally work under control of the political elites and in that way construct and internalize values that contribute to social stagnation and political status quo. Finally, it is recognized that internet and the social media have greater potential for proactive democratic participation in the public life. Even so, we identify issues of contemporary media i.e., social networks in terms of disintegration, subjectivation or alienation. "*

According to everything shown in the book *Društvena arhitektonika digitalnog doba (Social Architectonics of the Digital Age)* Jelena Gakovic managed to construct an architecture of a unique theory of power, action and media communication in the digital age using a conceptual analysis of the modern social context modeled by information and communication technologies by creating networks for the production of actions and reactions of social subjects.

The special value of the book *Društvena arhitektonika digitalnog doba (Social Architectonics of the Digital Age)* is the inclusion of the state of affairs and processes in the field of mediatization and the use of information and communication technology in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Everything that happens globally, the process of mediatization, *technofix* culturalization (as a-culturation) and "life on social networks", all connected with the consumer psychology of *the production of needs*, is also present in to Bosnian society, although everything that is global is localized through models of political crime and national-ethno-national para-liberal value practices, which are still seen as representing "input from outside" and not an authentic demonstration of these forms of life. It is precisely these elements of "the local jargon of authenticity" (Theodor W. Adorno) that Jelena Gakovic discovers in her research in the following way: "*Bosnian&Herzegovinian public space is predominantly marked by "ethnopolitics" and values that are not compatible with the spirit of liberal democracy, so that the outcome of the transition process towards the mature, consolidated democracy with full civil and media freedoms is rather uncertain. In addition to these special "mentality" and related institutional problems the media as a communications industry are subject to economic market laws, where success is mostly not measured by the degree of freedom achieved, but actually takes an unfavourable course for this ethicalpolitical ideal: maximizing profits achieves the degradation of professional and ethical standards. "* So it can definitely be argued that the architectonics of the digital age has towered over society in Bosnia and

Herzegovina and is transforming it in the direction of the creation of the invisible power of corporate capital, which operates through neoliberal forces and political psychology. The global "attraction" that Noam Chomsky marked with the phrase "Profit Over People" (1999) to which, in Jelena Gakovic's thought, can be added "media truth before people"... or "political power before people"... it can be clearly and tangibly seen in Bosnian society as well.

The digital age has changed all concepts: the concept of value and the concept of goods and the concept of work: everything is united in the concept of information and its processing in digital mining with digital currency and internet sales. But what remains unchanged in every age, no matter how it is named, stone or digital, imprinted in microchips or nanochips, is profit and ownership of the means that create it. And that property today is corporate, personally nameless, with invented corporate advertising names. The real name and advertising name, something invented by Hollywood as real and artistic (virtual) names for actors, is transformed today into an anonymous name used by everyone who works undercover. And modern corporate capital that hides in straw corporations all over the world today operates under a mask, under the name of Anonymous, as well as digital thieves who are on the trail of that capital, and digital media that deal with both.

The design of the front cover of the book *Social Architecture of the Digital Age* by Jelena Gakovic features the painting *The Great Wave of Kanagawa* by the Japanese painter Katsushika Hokusai (1831), which in a way represents the *motto* of the book, a distant signifier that needs to find meaning. But what is written as the author's *credo* of the book on the first inside page is a thought of Haruki Murakami (2002), a modern Japanese writer. *"And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm's all about."* (*Kafka on the Shore*, 2002) Much has been said with this *motto* and *credo* of the book. The critical theory of social phenomenology of the new age leaves no more room for someone to be *a catcher in the digital wave* today (in the digital age) because the infrastructure of that society is a useful tool for everyone that must be used (useful even for the catcher!), even when one wants to turn against the age which created it. In the digital wave, there is both danger and what saves, and text and context that need to be critically analyzed.



To be a *catcher in the digital wave* means to be in the middle of the danger that the digital wave carries with its architectonics and its power... and to use the power of that wave and that wind to free society from it and move into... maybe some new big wave that brings together the development of power, media, and information technology. The modern sociology that follows this development will probably be a sociology of the future shock as a *Sociological Foresight*; sociology that will be able to predict new shock models of the future using the *projective semantics of social relations*.

The knowledge-based society needs experts in the field of social sciences and humanities, and the need to extend hermeneutics and social phenomenology to technology and media has no other way than to accommodate knowledge practices and strategies in socially acceptable paradigms that themselves suffer their metabolism on the fly. Climatic changes (*klimatiké metabolé*) and technological changes (*technologikés metabolé*) are something that takes place so quickly that one can talk about the obsolescence of man who thinks that the best way to deal with these phenomena is to turn his head away from them or to sink into the metaphysical sand.

Now we can conclude that Jelena Gakovic is a contemporary sociologist who has the capacity for sociological research that is carried out, as Neurath says, on the open sea, in the course of sailing, in a direction that is not yet known where it leads, far from the direction that remained in the land of empty and trivial sociological axioms about "man as a social being" and about sociology as "a science of society". It is certain that there is truth in Ray Kurzweil's claim (*The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology, 2005*) that with new technologies man has the possibility to transcend both his social and his biological concept and that this changes both the social structure and the structure of knowledge about the social structure. A large part of these forms that transcend human nature, and which are created by man himself, was described very successfully by Dr. Jelena Gakovic in her book *Društvena arhitektonika digitalnog doba (Social Architectonics of the Digital Age)*.