

sumption that generally seems to be missing from the available literature (p. 8). I would highly recommend this book to those interested in the interrelationships between consumers and labour processes as this study offers a deeper understanding of how labour and consumption are interconnected in the practice of everyday life. By succeeding to document and make sense of the experiences and world views of those who lived in both socialism and in more contemporary times, Hofman effectively shows how women negotiate labour and consumer practices in the new millennium.

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DIGITIZED LIVES
Culture, Power and
Social Change in the
Internet Era

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In June 2014, Taylor & Francis, Routledge published the book *Digitized Lives: Culture, Power and Social Change in the Internet Era*. The book explores in-depth the impact of digital communication technologies on everyday life. It is divided into nine chapters, with the addition of *Preface*, *Conclusion*, *Bibliography* and *Index*. Each chapter dissects a different domain of digital technologies and its repercussions on economic, political and social spheres. In the *Preface*

the author explains the main differences between existing literature in digital technology and this book. Unlike other books with similar topics, the target audience for this book is not limited to scholars and academics. Instead, a target reader is anyone who wants to make sense of complex interrelationships between the digital and the real world.

In the first chapter, *How Do We Make Sense of Digitizing Cultures*, the author immediately emphasizes that the abundance of literature concerning digital technology is either dystopian or utopian. However, he asserts that in certain parts of the book he will also give his own position, and he often provokes the reader's mind with a myriad of questions instead of offering unequivocal answers. Much of the first chapter is dedicated to introducing some important definitions as a foundation for the rest of the book. First, for the purpose of the book he simplifies the definition of culture as: the values, beliefs and behaviors that are typical and defining of a group. Next, technological determinism is explained as a theory that stresses the technological side of the technology-society relation. In its extreme form, the author states, the theory argues that technologies are the single most important force driving human history and that there is an almost automatic cause-and-effect relationship between the kind of technology a culture has and the essential qualities of that culture. Technocultural analysis is the opposite of technological determinism; it argues that technologies like the Internet always have cultural assumptions built into them by culturally shaped producers.

In the second chapter, *How is the Digital World Made?*, after describing the historical development of the Internet, the author examines the non-technical decisions which are always inherently also social, political, economic and cultural and their impact on the production of the material objects in everyday use. He points out the immensely arduous conditions in which most digital devices are assembled.

The next important notion for understanding digital cultures is then introduced – the term "prosumer". It refers to user-generated content on the Internet, which grew exponentially due to rapid development of new technologies and broadband capabilities. In other words, users of the Internet are no longer just consumers. Instead, they are actively participating in producing much of the Internet content, hence the word "prosumer". In the last part of the second chapter, the main topic is the implication of digital technologies on the environment. Contrary to the popular belief that the electronics industry is a clean business, the author argues that the industry only *looks* clean. In effect, both the manufacture and the disposal of electronic devices involve serious dangers to people and the environment.

The third chapter, *Who Are We Online?*, contemplates the problems of online anonymity, privacy, quantity of online time and cultural imperialism. Sometimes anonymity provides users with the possibility to lie about their looks, job or age, but sometimes more serious issues arise, such as criminal acts, acts of impersonation etc. Generally, it could be said that identity cross-dressing is enabled and encouraged by online anonymity. However, as the author argues, even though individual identities have always been socially constructed, online identity formation needs to be looked at in its specific terms. As regards privacy, the author argues that the Internet, in conjunction with other digital technologies has given privacy a severe blow. Although the particular notions of privacy vary from culture to culture, the key issue is: are people able to reveal information about them selectively? By this definition, privacy has been deeply

eroded through the use of digital technologies. When considering the quantity of online time, the author once again takes a balanced approach. While online spaces are the source of a vast amount of information and possibilities of communication, time away from digital spaces can be essential to a richer, more complete life. With regard to cultural imperialism, the author argues that it is ubiquitous in online spaces. Although the Web has the potential to create a more even flow of culture from countries around the world, Europe, Japan and North America overwhelm the rest of the world.

The fourth chapter, *Is Everybody Equal Online?*, starts with explaining the default subject position. Namely, "subject position is where social structures beyond yourself place you in the world". When talking about cyberculture, default subject position refers to those who were the early creators of digital technology and cybercultures. Obviously, it was white men who played a key role in the development of cyberculture, but as the author points out, they were mostly unaware that they were building from a particular, limited viewpoint of the world. Because of this fact, real-world cultural diversity is almost invisible in cyberspace. The rest of the chapter focuses on inequalities and imbalances in cyberspaces regarding gender or racial issues, and the relation of people with disabilities and digital cultures.

In the fifth chapter, *Digitizing Desire?*, the author depicts the relationship between digital spaces and different sex topics. The first issue he raises is that there is not enough sexual variety online, i.e. pornography crowds out other varieties of sexuality that could be more available through digital spaces. This refers principally to sexual education. He then defines cybersex in a narrow and a broader meaning. In the broader definition, it is mostly represented by pornography, and the author explains in detail the phenomenon of "mainstreaming" of pornography. There are two main opposing attitudes concern-

ing pornography – conservative groups attacking porn on religious and moral grounds and various social libertarians and "pro-sex" feminists interested in promoting the liberation of female sexualities. However, the author emphasizes that the darkest impact of the enormous growth of porn industry is that it has indirectly led to greater amounts of sex trafficking. The last part of the chapter focuses on alternative sexualities in cyberspaces and underlines the fact that on one hand the Web has provided safe spaces for people whose sexual orientation is unwelcome in their home communities to find each other, but at the same time, this anonymity and disinhibition have provided safe cover for different forms of hate speech and discrimination.

The sixth chapter, *Does the Internet Have a Political Bias?*, explores the impact of new media on political culture. The digital media have made a vast amount of political information available easily. However, the question is whether people are indeed politically wiser due to this fact. If availability of information is used to further already existing political beliefs, then political lives will not be any richer and vice versa; if this abundance of information is used for substantive discussions and exchanges of ideas, then indeed greater political wisdom may emerge. Except offering a tremendous amount of information, digital technologies enable (i) political activism on one hand and (ii) spying, tracking down and harassing of social activists in non-democratic societies on the other. Therefore, as in many other cases, the impact of new media on democratization is two-fold and it cannot be determined unambiguously. Further, the author accentuates the distinction between three main

parts of digitized protest activities: hacktivism, wiki-leaking and cyberterrorism. Hacking generally refers to a form of civil disobedience and often leads to revelation of undemocratic practices. Wiki-leaking means obtaining and publishing data that expose illegal or harmful practices by the governments. Unfortunately, the author argues, there is no a priori formula for sorting out legitimate from illegitimate forms of leaking. Cyberterrorism is an unduly ambiguous term describing (i) offline terrorists who use digital spaces to communicate about their terrorist plans and/or (ii) groups who use hacking to purposely cause death and destruction but, often deliberately expanded by governments to fit any opponent they wish to discredit, harass or imprison.

The seventh chapter, *Are Digital Games Making Us Violent and Sex Crazy, or Will They Save the World?*, illustrates the role of digital games in education, violence and sexism. First, the educational aspect of games is covered. The author explains that every game requires some degree of learning. However, questions about how well they prepare gamers for other dimensions of social life are more complicated and addressed in the next part of the chapter. With regards to violence, the author argues that the game culture has become a major target of moral panic. Contrary to these panic attacks, the author believes that more careful and comprehensive research is needed before making any definitive claims about their impact on violent behavior, because correlation is mistaken for causality too often in this research area. The next part of the chapter observes different forms of racism, sexism and homophobia in online gaming spaces. Problems such as harassment of female gamers, sexualization of female characters, stereotyping based on nationality and religion are ubiquitous in online gaming spaces. However, some positive progress, mostly in terms of gradual improvements in the social consciences and imaginations of game designers, has been made to decrease the magnitude of these issues. The

most prominent among these attempts is the organization Games for Change, a coalition of game designers who are working on creating world-improving digital games.

The eighth chapter, *Are Kids Getting Dumber as Their Phones Get Smarter?*, focuses on various forms of education in the digital era, from pre-school to college education. In new media, children are without doubt learning digitally, the author argues. Again, there are two opposing sides with regards to technology in the classroom. But, as the author explains, technology *per se* is less relevant. The most important thing is the way in which technologies are used in education. New technologies enable interactive, open-ended and problem-solving environments if teachers use them in an optimal way. On the other hand, technology could also be misused by the teachers to decrease their workload. The next part of the chapter studies the MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and scholarly publishing. Large publishing conglomerates control much of the academic publishing, and make knowledge expensive, in spite of the fact that many authors would rather have their work made available to more people at lower cost than fewer people at higher cost. Here, the digitized era could play a positive role because the Internet is an instrument which enables free knowledge sharing. MOOCs have expanded dramatically since 2012, and although some social struggle is inevitable because they seem to threaten the very foundation of higher educational institutions, it looks like they are here to stay. The question is whether they will endure the pressures from brick-and-mortar educational institutions and stay free, or if they will be renewed in some other, more expensive iteration.

In the ninth and final chapter, *Who in the World is Online?*, the author presents some staggering information about global inequalities in the digital world. He argues that, although the World Wide Web is indeed a widespread phenomenon, it is far from being worldwide. Five billion people (70 percent of the world's population) have no engagement with digital culture at all. The reason why this matters is explained in previous chapters – every aspect of current social life has been reshaped along digital lines. Therefore, the fact that billions do not have access to these resources, i.e. the digital divide, is a major societal concern. This digital divide is a consequence of in-built cultural biases, and it can be lessened only when cultural differences and the differences in power that come with them are addressed. The enormous potential benefits of new media will be realized fully only when the digital divide is conquered. This can be achieved only through widespread structural changes resulting from collective political action.

In the *Conclusion*, subtitled *Hype, Hope and Possible Digitized Futures*, the author affirms that the digital technologies will expand further into human lives. He repeats the main idea he has reiterated throughout the book: that the crucial thing is not to exaggerate the positive or negative impacts of new technologies, but to observe as objectively as possible their development and how they can be used optimally for the benefit of all. He argues that, although technologies are powerful, humans by virtue of consciousness and self-consciousness have the edge in this relationship. So, the bigger question is in what kind of world these technologies exist, because their environment will define their definitive impact.

The book *Digitized Lives* is written in a simple and understandable way. Its principal virtue is that it neither creates a utopian nor dystopian vision of the future in a world permeated with digital media, but exhibits evidence of both sides of the debate. Through its nine chapters it ex-

plains the relations that digital media have with various aspects of human lives. Some of these chapters could even be called myth-busters in a sense that they refute some previously widely accepted beliefs. It is a must-read for anyone who longs to understand the relationship between culture, power and social change in the era of new media.

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RURALNA OPĆINA:
SUTRA
Društvena
re/konstrukcija na
ruralnom teritoriju

Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, 2014., 140 str.

Studija *Ruralna općina: sutra* rezultat je rada na projektu *Društvena re/konstrukcija na ruralnom teritoriju: razvojna samoodrživost*, što ga je financiralo Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i sporta. Osnovni cilj projekta odnosio se na istraživanje o problemima i posljedicama koje je donijela suvremena upravno-teritorijalna razdioba u Hrvatskoj, s posebnim osvrtom na ruralne prostore. Stručnjaci koji su surađivali na projektu, koji su u konačnici objavili studiju prikaz koje slijedi, pripadaju različitim znanstvenim područjima, čineći tako interdisciplinarni projektni tim, što pridonosi kvalitetnijoj interpretaciji rezultata istraživanja. Tri su županije u sjeveroza-

padnoj Hrvatskoj bile pogodno tlo za provedbu istraživanja: Međimurska, Varaždinska i Krapinsko-zagorska županija. Odabir županija temeljio se na uvidu u statističke podatke te iskustvenom uvidu istraživača na projektu, koji su željeli istražiti događa li se u ovom dijelu Hrvatske ponešto kvalitetniji ruralni razvoj, odnosno je li na djelu primjena određenoga razvojnog modela koji bi mogao poslužiti kao opći model razvoja ili je pak riječ o sklopu društvenih i gospodarskih prilika koje su usmjeravale dosadašnji razvoj ruralnoga prostora sjeverozapadne Hrvatske.

Interdisciplinarni pristup na spomenutom projektu iznjedrio je studiju koju su unutar sedam poglavlja oblikovali sljedeći autori: Maja Štambuk, Marijan Jukić, Tereza Rogić Lugarić, Jasenka Kranjčević, Marica Marinović Golubić i Lynette Šikić-Mićanović. Autori su tako povezali skupinu stručnjaka unutar koje se nalaze dvije sociologinje, demograf, antropologinja te arhitektica i pravница.

Prvo poglavlje u studiji, pod naslovom *Razvojna samoodrživost na ruralnom teritoriju*, rad je autorice Maje Štambuk, sociologinje, koja srž problema pronalazi u izostanku odgovarajućih modernizacijskih procesa na hrvatskim ruralnim prostorima. Ističe kako se u Hrvatskoj selo još uvijek poistovjećuje sa siromašnom poljoprivredom i siromašnim seljakom, s jedne strane, odnosno "selo ostaje 'prostor iza' jer ga i dalje preskačemo kao prostor moguće modernizacijske akcije" (str. 11). Također ističe da su općine, mali gradovi i mreže sela ključna varijabla u oblikovanju lokalne samoodrživosti, odnosno "lokalnih imuniteta". Ovdje je naglašeno i jedno od osnovnih razvojnih načela, a to je nastojanje na poštivanju svih specifičnosti određenoga ruralnog prostora. Autorica je svjesna kako se u Hrvatskoj, bez obzira na njezinu površinu, ne može govoriti o ruralnom prostoru nego o ruralnim prostorima, koji su specifični i posebni svaki za sebe. Potrebno je dodati kako cjelokupna studija zbog svojega predmeta istraživanja – obilježja modela organizacije teri-