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OUR SOCIETY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Morelock, J., & Narita, F. Z. (2021). *The Society of the Selfie*. Amsterdam University Press. ISBN 9781914386268, 190 pages.

Nowadays, it is challenging to imagine the visual communication without the genre of selfie. The publication provides an insight into the concept of the social aspects of the "selfie" and applies (not exclusively) Debord's (1992) theory of the society of the spectacle in relation to our current digital environment. The authors use the critical paradigm in the reviewed book as in their other studies (see Morelock, 2018; 2021a; Narita & Morelock, 2021) and attempt to demonstrate how the social aspects of this phenomenon have had a (rather negative) impact on our democracy through neoliberal capitalist ideology. This review presents some of the theoretical concepts examined in the book.

The book is divided into seven chapters in which the authors explain their motivations through suitable theoretical concepts and provide practical examples for the reader to compare them. In Chapter One, 'Introduction: Information Technology and Authoritarian Populism', the authors familiarize the reader with the applied methodology, stating the theoretical constellations associated with the concepts of theorists of the Frankfurt school (p. 5) followed in the chapters below.

The Chapter Two, 'Communication Technologies and the History of the Spectacle', offers a historical overview of the development of media and communication channels as they have impacted our current society, e.g., telegraph, cinema, radio and television broadcasting, and of course, the emergence of Web 2.0. In this chapter, the authors discuss mainly the concepts of Debord's spectacle in relation to images, commodity fetishism, and Flusser's theory of surfaces (Ströhl, 2004). Applying these theories, the authors demonstrate e.g., the absence of a relationship between consumers and producers since consumers do not seek knowledge of the production of the commodity they purchase and use. In this case, the 'production is invisible' (p. 23). Using the theory of surfaces, the authors claim that individuals do not tend to think about images in great depth and that the image has no trajectory. In an online world, it is easier for individuals to use social media as a tool to present the best version of themselves as a type of performance. This is also connected to the need to draw attention and make a good impression to get likes, shares, etc.

Chapter Three introduces 'Neoliberal Impression Management' and a description of co-presence (Goffman, 1963). The authors discuss the division into embodied and disembodied social presence, where the further is happening in a physical space and latter in the virtual one. The authors continue with a discussion of COVID-19 and the increased acceptance of online contact. The need for attention and presentation of the best version of self is something which can be applied in

marketing, where individuals see themselves as a commodity to generate profit (Fromm, 1947). This is closely associated with impression management. Individuals feel the need to impress their audience, even though it might be invisible (discussed in Chapter Four). In addition, people who seek attention in the digital market may become involved in personal branding, which is actually an act of consumption and may lead to narcissistic behaviour. It seems easier to do so in the digital world where the audience stays mostly invisible.

The Chapter Four, 'Invisible Audience and Echo Chamber Effects', deals with Mead's (1934) theory of the generalized other; the concept used to describe the opinion of the social group in relation to the individuals which belong to the group. The authors expand on terms such as *newsfeed* and *invisible audience*, which relate to the generalized other and the communication channels individuals use in their presentation of a spectacular self. To describe the echo chamber effect, the authors apply Sunstein's explanation (Sunstein, 2009, 2017), which is very similar to the term *social bubble*, where individuals are more inclined to accept the opinions of other people who are somehow in consensus with their own ones. This is also closely associated with polarization of public e.g., by the use of propaganda by authoritarian political agents (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six). Nevertheless, individuals could be also excluded from their close communities e.g., because of their abnormal behaviour.

In Chapter Five 'Dialectics of Alienation and Abnormality', we can find alongside Fromm's (1955) theory of alienation and Durkheim's theory of anomie (Durkheim et al., 2014). These concepts are examined in relation to individuals in modern society and digital environment, where many find it challenging to adapt to the technological developments and societal changes which have occurred, thus leading to exclusion and deviant behaviour in the use of social media (among others). An explanation of Foucault's (2003) theory of abnormality comes with examples of contemporary popular series and movies like *You* (2018) or *Friend Request* (2016).

The Chapter Six, 'Authoritarianism and Resistance', is dedicated to the concepts discussed earlier by the book, but here, they are seen from a political perspective of the contemporary crisis in liberal democracies and the society of selfie. Ideologies as authoritarianism and radicalism may thrive using digital media, as its political actors can reach broader audience and disseminate it with propagandistic content. The authors offer examples such as the protests in Iran, the Capitol intrusion of 2021 in the US, and the presidential elections of 2018 in Brazil to show how social media were used for sharing the ideology with attempts to have an impact on the audience. Following the accounts by Adorno and Horkheimer (2008), the authors deal with the issues of narcissism and socio-political psychology of political actors who have fascist tendencies and may lack the fundamental morals.

In the final chapter, 'Conclusion: A Turning Point for Liberal Democracy', the authors summarize the content of the book and emphasize that the

concepts and methods discussed in the book could be further investigated and do not necessarily have distinct boundaries or no overlap.

The book provides the powerful overview of interwoven theoretical concepts with actual empirical events, and as such, it is an important contribution into the field and the highly recommended title for inclusion into the critical reading on media studies. Readers who are out of the critical theory scope should obtain more insight through the publications listed in the references of the authors' work.

The authors have included many theoretical concepts complemented by examples that effectively conceptualize the examined phenomena. In addition, the authors efficiently interweave these concepts with the functions of digital technologies in the contemporary world. While I appreciate the authors' attempt to present an overview of the historical and technological developments of the media and digital media, the methodology sub-chapter seems to be underdeveloped. This weaker point of the book could be balanced by the content of the book 'How to Critique Authoritarian Populism Methodologies of the Frankfurt School' (Morelock, 2021b) which can help readers in understanding the selected methodology that some may find challenging to comprehend.

In conclusion, the authors fulfil their aims and deliver the highly complex overview of contemporary topic. It assists with the applied terminology and broadens understanding of theoretical concepts alongside current technological developments. The structure might be challenging for the readers with no additional knowledge, nevertheless the book can help get a fresh perspective on the topic so dominant in the contemporary digital world of social media.

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1   In their list of references, the authors also refer to non-English titles, drawing on works originally published in languages such as German and French. I list the references for the concepts of those in English.

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AUDIENCES CHANGE NEWS VALUES

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Temmerman, M., & Mast, J. (Eds.). (2021). *News Values from an Audience Perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan. 973-3-030-45045-8, 189 pp.

Since the first newspapers appeared, the selection of events in the news has been one of the fundamental tasks of journalism. It is still true today, although the editors have a slightly easier role in fulfilling this duty considering the seemingly shoreless ocean of the Internet. The selection process continues, but its core has moved from the newsrooms into the sphere of audience activities.

Journalists and journalism textbooks discussed the news selection criteria before they were regularly named news values. The seminal study of Galtung and Ruge (1965) definitively established the term and transferred the subject to media studies. There it became as important as the selection process itself, examined through the prism of gatekeeping studies. More than a half-century later – and despite occasional voices saying the concept of news values has already been exhausted – the theory has been getting new interest. After Harcup and O'Neil (2001, 2017) made significant contributions to the modernization of the theory for the era of digital media, a discursive approach by Caple and Bednarek (2017) followed with a massive response.

And here comes another promising development: the orientation to how the