

to the layman—correctly and easily comprehensible. Whoever looks into the phenomenon of the Internet and its effects on the modern society and thereby also takes account of the regulations must read this book.

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The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society

Manuel Castells, Oxford University Press, London, 2001, 292 pp., £14.99, ISBN 0-19-924153-8

The Internet Galaxy encapsulates the contradictory ways in which the Internet is being deployed across the world. Manuel Castells aims to reveal the interactions between the Internet, business and society and to provoke his readers into thinking seriously about potentially worrying trends. He employs phrases such as ‘informed bewilderment’ or the ‘logic of chaotic complexity’ to characterise the implications of the Internet’s development. He asserts that the Internet is the very ‘fabric of our lives’ and he suggests that its enabling power could sustain a ‘culture of hope in the future’; a future that is consistent with the well-being of all people. Castells’ purpose is strictly analytical because he believes that experience and knowledge must precede any action that might jeopardise the Internet’s potential to promote innovation and creative experimentation.

Castells sets out to investigate the cultures and motivations of many actors who are intensely involved with the Internet (the techno-meritocrats, hackers, virtual communitarians, and entrepreneurs). He lays bare the often contradictory values that inform their actions and which, he argues, bias the Internet’s development in particular, and potentially irreversible, ways. Castells sees the Internet as ‘a culture made up of a technocratic belief in the progress of humans through technology, enacted by communities of hackers thriving on free and open technological creativity, embedded in virtual networks aimed at

reinventing society, and materialized by money-driven entrepreneurs into the workings of the new economy.’ He shows how this ‘culture’ is influencing the development of electronic business services, the activities of virtual community members, the relationships between civil society and the state, and the privacy and liberties of individuals. He suggests that multimedia content and highly personalised hypertexts may favour the reduction of common or shared meanings and he looks to art, combining the virtual and the physical, as a potential means of building cultural bridges. He sets to rest the familiar misconception that the spread of the Internet favours only decentralisation or the ‘end of geography’ and he clearly demonstrates that a growing digital divide is an issue of crisis proportions.

In this book, Manuel Castells supports all efforts to unravel the dynamics of domination and liberation that the Internet, a global network of networks, supports. This book includes updated and expanded material from his Clarendon Lectures in Management at Oxford University in 2000. It is packed with illustrations of recent research findings and contains many useful references to work on the implications of the Internet in the United States, Europe and elsewhere.

Among the issues that Castells raises for consideration is the tendency of Internet developments to increase the transparency of our everyday lives. He suggests that the Internet’s current development trajectory implies increasing surveillance and that people ‘may have no liberty, and no place to hide.’ He is optimistic, however, because, as he argues, ‘technologies of control can be counteracted by technologies of freedom.’ He looks to governments to mobilise efforts to design and deploy the technologies of freedom, but he is reticent to comment on what should be done. This is because, although he suggests that current Internet developments are biasing the Internet in specific ways, this is a matter ‘still to be revealed by future investigation.’ This reticence may be seen as a major strength by some readers who believe that any form of policy intervention will stem or distort the vast potential to create new Internet applications and services. But it may be seen as a weakness by others, that is, by those readers who want to know what might be done to ensure that the bleaker potentials of the Internet are suppressed.

For Castells, it is intergovernmental organisations and national governments that should enact political

change so that the Internet is developed and used in ways that are consistent with a social order in which people are enabled to become responsible human beings. But the 'culture' of the decision makers who are influential in establishing the policy regimes that shape the Internet is not examined in this volume. This is a crucial group of stakeholders whose voices permeate the corridors of power where global governance is being performed. In numerous forums from the United Nations to the OECD, policies are being fashioned that influence how the Internet develops. On issues of taxation, privacy, access, cybercrime, or the 'new' economy, policy makers consider how it may be feasible to 'tame' a social order where the Internet is often understood as a major destabilising factor.

Sometimes these policy making stakeholders are Internet 'literate'; they overlap with the four cultural groupings that Castells does examine. But in other instances these stakeholders are unaware of the technical feasibility of implementing the policy measures they recommend and of the consequences for society. Castells does not consider whether opportunities can be encouraged so that these policy stakeholders can acquire the necessary literacy. Nor does he tackle the question as to whether participants in nascent Internet governance regimes will co-ordinate their actions to favour outcomes consistent with Internet developments that he hopes will improve the human condition. In this regard, the focus on 'The Internet' in this book tends to decontextualise the analysis from the places where governance processes are shaping and constraining the possibilities for the future.

In the institutional settings where Castells hopes decision makers will mobilise action to encourage next generation Internet developments that are equitable and inclusive, decision makers often create visions and actions that they believe offer a universal solution for all those who may wish to take advantage of the Internet's potential. Castells acknowledges that our 'institutional and social under-development' permits, and even encourages, this view and certainly he recognises the diversity of Internet developments in the many local contexts around the world. But insofar as the visions and actions of these policy makers do lead to Internet and social developments that are inconsistent with the goals that Castells espouses for society, the reader may wish that he had provided a little more guidance about necessary policy interven-

tions, even if these had to be based upon a partial and still-unfolding evidence base.

This is a provocative and very accessible book. It will appeal to all those who are struggling to ensure that the global reach of the Internet and its application bring a positive contribution to all members of society; a contribution that is a stark contrast to a technological development that still has the potential to be deployed in ways that exclude and disempower.

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From Knowledge Management to Strategic Competence Measuring Technological, Market and Organisational Innovation, Series on Technology Management, Vol. 3

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The background for Joe Tidd to edit this book was obviously the understanding that the concept of strategic (or core) competencies researched and developed over the past decade on the basis of a resource-based view of the firm has fragmented into a number of related fields, i.e. knowledge management, organisational learning and innovation management. Therefore, the book aims at re-establishing the links between strategic (or core) competencies and the mentioned related areas in order to build a more coherent framework for future academic research and business practice. As the title indicates, the focus of the book is on the measurement, management and improvement of organisational, technological and market competencies. The editor has invited academic researchers and business consultants to contribute to this subject, among them Richard Hall, Peter Hiscocks, Dan Riff, Tony Clayton, Graham Turner, Ciaran Driver, Pari Patel, Francis Narin, Dorothea Griffiths, Max Boisot, Richard Lamming, Pervaiz K.