

Book and article reviews

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BOOK AND ARTICLE REVIEWS

Croteau, D., Hoynes, W. *The Business of Media. Corporate Media and the Public Interest*. Thousand Oaks, California, London, New Delhi: Pine Forge Press 2001.

In this book, the two sociologists David Croteau (Virginia Commonwealth University) and William Hoynes (Vassar College) describe the different developments in the last decades in the media and their influences on society.

In Part I, entitled *Profits and the Public Interest: Theoretical and Historical Context*, the authors provide a theoretical framework and historical context for considering the media industry. They consider and compare at a general level two competing conceptual frameworks: a market model and a public sphere model. The two models will be analysed in depth respectively in Part II and Part III.

The postulates of the market model enables to understand the market logic of the media industry. Instead the public sphere model introduces social issues as the public interest role of the mass media and it is especially helpful in evaluating the influences of the media on society.

Three actors are taken into consideration: the media, the market and the public sphere.

Part II, entitled *Industry structure and corporate strategy: explaining the rise of media conglomerates*, examines the changes and the trends (growth, integration, globalisation, concentration of

ownership) in the media industry structure and presents the debate between the perspective of the market model and the one of public sphere approach about the significance of these trends.

For example, mergers between companies of different media (phone company with cable company, Internet provider and multimedia company) and the deregulation took to the rise of multinational media giants with concentrated power. The strategies pursued by this media giants in the new environment aimed at maximising profits (to profit by the size, to exploit synergy, to develop branding) reducing cost (to target lucrative niche audiences with segmentation and specialisation) and minimising risk (to develop diversification of holdings, globalisation and joint ventures) are described and in particular the attempts to reduce the risk are criticised.

Finally, in Part III the authors consider the social, political and cultural impact of the business strategies in putting critically in relationship the changes in the media industry and the public interest. To my opinion, the most interesting chapter of the book is the last one, *Choosing the Future: Citizens, Policy, and the Public Interest*. The authors starting from the former critical analysis and basing on the public sphere perspective which they consider as the best model, suggest some ways to revive the public interest role of media.

First of all, in Croteau and Hoynes' opinions so as to avoid neglecting the public interest media needs to look at their public not just as consumer but also as citizens, two notions which are not synonyms. In fact the main player of the public sphere and in a broader sense of the democratic society is the citizen: a concept that, as suggested by the authors, has been forgotten by the Telecommunication Act 1996 of United States.

There are also useful policy initiatives that can be undertaken in order to help mass media playing a role in fostering citizens interests. This public policy mechanisms apply both to media content and media access.

In relation to media content regulation, Croteau and Hoynes are more favourable to regulatory initiatives which calls for the mandatory inclusion of certain types of content that contributes to citizenship than a restrictive approach for a range reasons. For example concrete solutions could be: minimum number of hour per week of substantive public affairs programming, mandated "public access" time slots for local, independently produced videos, free airtime to political candidates in election years, reinstation of the Fairness Doctrine.

And this promotional attitude should be adopted to encourage broader access of multiplicity of perspectives to the media and the new media, especially in the new multimedia system, in combination with financial support for noncommercial initiatives and antitrust policy.

The contribute of media in reviving civic engagement and public interest can also result from restructuring of the public broadcasting's mission and role, from the profession of journalist and

from active citizen engaged in exerting pressure on the system to whom the book is dedicated.

The Business of Media is a critical analysis of the changing media industry with a constructive approach. In fact, Croteau and Hoynes don't limit themselves to critics but indicate some concrete ways to limit the negative effects of media changes on society, in proposing the approach they called "The Public Sphere Model". Before the authors offer a detailed framework of media industry and its recent development.

It is also important to underline that the reference context are mainly United States even if a range of statements are universally valid. The structure of the book, the accessible language, the use of case studies and the Appendix with selected described online resources about these topics make the essay suitable for students interested in studying media with a wide perspective.

Arianna Imberti,
(arianna.imberti@lu.unisi.ch)
Università della Svizzera italiana

Susan Hockey, *Electronic Texts in the Humanities*, Oxford University Press, 2000

Electronic Texts in the Humanities gives a rich overview of the current possibilities of using computer-based tools in linguistic and literary analysis and also gives insights on what could be improved in the future in this field. The book is the latest publication of Susan Hockey and it seems to be the *summa* of her long experience in the field of humanities computing. Susan Hockey is currently Professor of Library and Information Studies at London University

College. She has previously been the Director of the Canadian Institute for Research Computing in the Arts at the University of Alberta and the Director of the Center for Electronic Texts in the Humanities (CETH).

By “electronic text in the humanities” Susan Hockey means “electronic representation of any textual material which is an object of study for literary, linguistic, historical or related purposes”. In this book she aims to point out that for linguistic and literary computer-based manipulation and analysis, an appropriate tagging of the electronic text is essential. This could seem to be just a technical problem. In reality, it is a very important breakthrough to allow linguists and literary scholars to take advantage of the big research opportunities opened by the use of computers. An adequate electronic transcription has to satisfy two requirements. On the one side, since in literary and linguistic analysis the same text has to be used by different scholars for different purposes, the same electronic representation of that text should be able to serve many different purposes. On the other side, since humanities texts are complex, these complex features should be adequately represented in the electronic version. Since nowadays we are faced by a mass of different (and in many cases not satisfying) encoding formats, the challenge is to establish a standard format, which allows manipulation of the same text in various ways according to the different goals of different linguistic or literary analysis. Therefore much research has been devoted to establishing what makes a high quality and multipurpose scholarly electronic text. The TEI-Text Encoding Initiative (<http://www.tei-c.org/>) represents a serious and important attempt to create this standard.

In chapters 4 to 9 of her book Susan Hockey illustrates the current possibilities of computer-based linguistic and literary manipulation and analyses. For each of them she stresses advantages but also problems caused by the computer way of processing and she outlines improvements, which could be obtained by an adequate encoding of the text. Even if the Internet is recognized to be an important tool, it doesn't constitute the central issue. The focus is mainly set on computer-based tools, which can run the Internet independently. Chapter 4 is dedicated to concordances and interactive retrieval and batch processing. Chapter 5 focuses on computer-based studies of style (the study of intertextuality, the study of vocabulary, tools for thematic analysis, the study of sound and metre in poetry, the study of the structure of dramatic works). Chapter 6 deals with computer-based corpus linguistics (studying words in context, measuring the significance of examples, studying lexical collocations and lemmatization). Chapter 7 is dedicated to stylometric analyses (quantitative analyses for authorship attribution and related problems). Chapter 8 focuses on electronic tools for critical editions and chapter 9 deals with dictionaries and lexical databases. Susan Hockey illustrates these various processes in presenting one or more successfully realized examples. In this way the reader can benefit from a critical panorama of the development of humanities computing during the second half of the 20th century. Some important realized projects, programs and analysis results are described: the TACT-Textual Analysis Computing Tool, The Rob Watt's Concordance Program, McCarty's Analytical Onomasticon of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (<http://ilex.cc.kcl.ac.uk/wlm/>)

onomasticon-sampler/), the CLAWS-Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System, the European Union Project EAGLES-Expert Advisory Group on Language Engineering Standards, The Internet Shakespeare Editions (<http://web.uvic.ca/shakespeare/index.html>), The Canterbury Tales Project (<http://www.cta.dmu.ac.uk/projects/ctp/>), the MEP-Model Editions Partnership (<http://adh.sc.edu/>), the Internet and CD-Rom versions of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (<http://www.oed.com/>), the *Dictionary of Old English* and the Perseus Project (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>).

It is essential to consider Susan Hockey's argument about the importance of interpretation in order to understand her global approach towards computing in the humanities. Throughout her exposition, she underlines that adequate text encoding is necessary but not sufficient for adequate textual interpretation. This remains the most important point in linguistics and literature research: "(...) the computer will provide an overall picture which would be impossible to derive accurately by manual methods. (...) They [computer-based tools] can provide concrete evidence to support or refute hypotheses or interpretations which have in the past been based on human reading and the somewhat serendipitous noting of interesting features. (...) The computer is merely a tool. It can do some things very well, but much should be left to the judgement of the scholar" (pp. 66-67). In computer-assisted analysis the role of the researcher remains central and fundamental.

Sabrina Lurati,
(sabrina.lurati@utoronto.ca)
University of Toronto

Bruno Ollivier: *Observer la communication. Naissance d'une interdiscipline*, CNRS Editions, Paris, 2000

L'ouvrage de Bruno Ollivier, consacré aux sciences de l'information et de la communication (SIC), se compose de seize chapitres divisés en deux parties. La première partie pose les jalons théoriques et épistémologiques qui fondent ce champ de la recherche en sciences sociales, tandis que la seconde tente de repenser la constitution même de la discipline, vue comme une «interdiscipline». Le but de l'auteur est de baliser ce qu'il nomme les «territoires épistémologiques» dont participent les sciences de la communication, conçues comme discipline universitaire depuis une vingtaine d'années, en France. Ce point de la situation s'ouvre sur des propositions pour un avenir des SIC qui dépasse le seul cadre hexagonal et concerne toutes celles et tous ceux dont l'activité touche à l'une ou l'autre des nombreuses dimensions de la communication.

L'auteur, après avoir succinctement retracé l'histoire du terme de communication et relevé le caractère protéiforme de la notion, retient que l'objet d'étude essentiel des SIC sont (ou devraient être...) les *situations* de communication. Il montre dans les chapitres 3 et 4 l'emprise que la sémiologie et plus particulièrement la linguistique ont eue sur les premiers développements dans ce domaine. Ces deux chapitres survolent les apports fondamentaux de Saussure, de la linguistique structurale et de la grammaire générative et montrent l'influence de ces courants sur la conception générale de la communication sur une large tranche du XXe siècle.

Le chapitre 5 est consacré tout entier au concept du signe et au triangle sémiotique. L'auteur fait principale-

ment référence aux travaux bien connus de Umberto Eco (en ignorant pourtant les discussions de Heger et de Baldinger sur la notion de trapèze sémiotique) et pose dans ce cadre que «l'approche d'une situation de communication implique [...] la prise en compte simultanée de trois niveaux d'analyse» (p. 56), qui touchent évidemment au signifiant, au signifié et au référent.

Le sixième chapitre présente la situation de communication comme une «matrice de représentations» (Eco). Selon cette approche, qui est l'un des développements les plus récents de la conception cybernétique de la communication, la lecture d'un récit, par exemple, correspond à un processus de construction sémiotique par le sujet. Cette construction s'opère à 4 niveaux: pragmatique (la langue n'associe plus seulement des signifiés et des signifiants -la fonction référentielle chez Jakobson- mais fournit aussi des règles discursives), sémiotique (prise en compte du non verbal), narratif et encyclopédique. Cette construction n'a pas pour objet des contenus, mais des matrices de représentations de la réalité que chaque niveau permet de «décoder». Dans cette approche, le code linguistique-sémiotique intègre donc les représentations du sujet dans sa définition et le sens est conçu comme le produit d'une interprétation qui se clot par l'assignation de valeurs de vérité.

Dans le chapitre 7, B. Ollivier investit le champ de la sociolinguistique par le biais des travaux déjà anciens de Basil Bernstein. On doit louer le souci de l'auteur de montrer l'importance de ces recherches pour les sciences de la communication. Mais on ne peut, comme il le fait, s'en tenir à cette seule vision, par trop mécaniste, des corrélats entre langue et classes sociales (par le

truchement de l'opposition entre *code restreint* et *code élargi*) et ne pas mentionner les développements ultérieurs en micro- et macrosociolinguistique qui trouvent eux aussi un écho dans les SIC¹.

La première partie s'achève sur une présentation superficielle de différents apports théoriques qui ont battu en brèche, du moins en partie, la place centrale du linguistique dans les recherches sur la communication. Cette dernière n'est alors plus envisagée seulement comme un fait linguistique, mais comme un phénomène social plus général, où la langue détient encore une place importante, mais plus un monopole. L'objet même de l'analyse s'étend alors aux institutions (Habermas, Bourdieu) et à la relation entre le chercheur et son terrain. Les notions de champ de relations objectives (Bourdieu), d'acteur -en tant qu'agent autonome- et de territoire (Goffman) y sont abordées pour mettre en évidence la logique non linéaire et pluridisciplinaire de la communication.

La seconde partie de l'ouvrage de B. Ollivier est une sorte de *vademecum* pour le chercheur en sciences de l'information et de la communication. Dans le chapitre 9, on discute brièvement du statut du chercheur qui, selon l'auteur, repose sur une tension primordiale: d'un côté, les objectifs du chercheur diffèrent fondamentalement de ceux des acteurs sociaux; de l'autre un lien émotif relie le chercheur et les sujets de ses recherches. Cette évidence ouvre ce-

¹ Pour une présentation critique des thèses de Bernstein, on lira avec profit les pages déjà anciennes de Norbert Dittmar: *Soziolinguistik*, Athenäum, Frankfurt, surtout les pages 97-126.

pendant sur de nombreux problèmes théoriques et pratiques, que l'auteur aborde sans vraiment les traiter.

Le chapitre 10 est consacré à l'objet de la recherche en sciences de la communication. «[Elle] peut prendre les formes les plus variées. Elle va de l'observation des consommateurs à une terrasse de café à celle des prisons ou des asiles, de l'analyse de films à celle des musées, de l'observation des stratégies d'entreprise à celle du rôle des technologies d'information et de communication...» (p. 113). Qu'ils concentrent leur attention sur le message, sur les acteurs, sur les situations ou sur les outils, ce qui pourrait unir les chercheurs du domaine, selon Ollivier, c'est la démarche. S'inspirant des commentaires de Morin en sociologie, l'auteur estime que la démarche tient avant tout dans la posture du chercheur face à son objet d'investigation, posture qui «associe engagement et recul, observation et participation, implication et explication» (p. 116). A ce stade, le champ hétérogène des études en sciences de la communication (qui notons-le conserve toujours son pluriel) trouverait sa cohérence dans les méthodologies des chercheurs et dans le cadre épistémologique à l'intérieur duquel ils travaillent.

Le très bref chapitre 11 rappelle, s'il était encore nécessaire, les raisons pour lesquelles «établir des ponts» entre les disciplines concernées par les SIC. L'auteur passe malheureusement trop vite sur les problématiques liées à la mise en convergence d'outils théoriques d'origines diverses qu'implique l'interdisciplinarité... Il consacre bien son douzième chapitre au «fast thinking» (pseudo-théorie globale qui vise à expliquer tous les phénomènes par l'application de prétendus schémas canoniques) pour le combattre, mais cela semble au lecteur

une manière un peu détournée de passer sous silence des problèmes plus fondamentaux qui sont justement au cœur des critiques de l'interdisciplinarité.

Dans le chapitre 13, Bruno Ollivier croise deux axes centraux de la communication: le sémiotique et le politique. Les mouvements qui s'opèrent selon ces deux axes et les relations qui articulent ces deux dimensions permettent la mise en évidence d'identités (et les processus de leur constitution) et de territoires (matériels ou symboliques), ainsi que leur revendication; ce sont là parmi les éléments-clés d'une approche qui tient pleinement compte de la nature conflictuelle de la communication.

Enfin, les trois derniers chapitres du livre explorent les rapports entre le contenu des matrices représentationnelles (cf. chapitre 6) et le récit, la rhétorique et les formes d'organisation sociale. Sans être novatrices, ces pages, qui rendent plus concrètes les conceptions de l'auteur et précisent ce qui sous-tend son projet, sont parmi les plus stimulantes de l'ouvrage. Elles permettent en particulier de pointer l'un des problèmes majeurs des SIC, à savoir leur difficulté à se pencher sur des terrains contemporains à enjeu sociopolitique réel²...

De conception plutôt systémique, l'approche de Bruno Ollivier s'appuie sur les développements de la sémiotique et de la cybernétique (Eco, Bateson, Palo Alto), sur les apports de la linguistique, en particulier textuelle, et sur des notions (l'identité, le territoire, ...) qui

² De nombreuses exceptions existent cependant. Pour ne citer que quelques auteurs «récents»: Joel de Rosnay, Edgar Roskis, Philippe Quéau, Dan Schiller, Herbert I. Schiller (cf. bibliographie).

mettent en jeu le social et qui manifestent les rapports de force qui agissent dans et par la communication. Cette approche peut permettre de régénérer avec un certain succès la discipline des sciences de la communication, en proposant un support épistémologique et méthodologique. Pourtant le danger d'hétérogénéité n'est pas supprimé. L'interdiscipline que Ollivier appelle de ses vœux doit encore vaincre les difficultés immenses qu'induit l'usage d'outils théoriques parfois radicalement étrangers les uns aux autres. Est-ce là l'unique perspective crédible pour ces sciences si elles veulent consolider les espoirs scientifiques qu'elles ont pu susciter depuis leurs débuts (on pense, parmi bien d'autres, à Roland Barthes, comme précurseur, ou à Edgar Morin, dont les travaux récents rejoignent le souci de l'auteur)? C'est probable. Et l'ouvrage de Bruno Ollivier est un jalon utile à la réflexion et à la constitution d'une telle interdiscipline. Ainsi, les questions méthodologiques et épistémologiques qui soutiennent ce livre se font l'écho de la problématique pérennité d'une discipline qui n'est pas unifiée et dont les pratiques sont parfois mises en cause. Mais les propositions de l'auteur demandent encore à être réfléchies, et les sources de réflexion étoffées (on s'étonnera entre autres des références anciennes et presque uniquement en français de l'auteur), pour assurer une solidité à ce qui n'est pour l'instant qu'une ébauche.

Des apports théoriques et méthodologiques nouveaux sont venus renouveler les pratiques des chercheurs en communication (la microsociologie d'inspiration ethnométhodologique, la psychologie sociale, l'analyse du discours). Or, la mise en relation des outils à disposition n'est pas aisée, mais elle consti-

tue une réponse d'envergure à un projet qui n'en manque pas. Les naissances peuvent se révéler difficiles. La (re)naissance souhaitée de la communication en tant qu'interdiscipline est de celles-là. Elle ne constitue pourtant qu'une étape.

*Nicolas Pepin,
Séminaire des langues romanes,
Université de Bâle*

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Eliezer Geisler: *Methodology, Theory, and Knowledge in the Managerial and Organizational Sciences. Actions and Consequences*. Westport: Quorum Books, 1999.

In this book an architecture design is presented, aimed to support researchers in organizational and managerial studies.

The author, Professor of Management at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, reacts to the limits of extant methodologies he has faced in almost a decade of research.

A complete research protocol usually moves from the formulation of research questions. Then concepts are defined and relationship between them are stated in the form of propositions. Dependent and independent variables are identified and finally empirical tests are designed in order to verify the propositions.

While formulating propositions and identifying variables, researchers build a representation of the phenomenon of interest. Any representation cannot be neutral, because it is the result of many assumptions.

In order to choose what to include in the representation, researchers face a trade-off: simplicity, elegance and parsimony of the model versus explanatory strength of the model.

Often, due to the necessity to achieve measures, they opt for a simple and manageable model, although it does not capture the phenomenon: researchers identify two isolated events and observe how do they behave under statistical tests.

This process results into an association degree measure. Geisler points out that over-reliance on statistical tests, prevents to produce new knowledge: validity issue has to be redefined in order to assess also the theoretical linkages.

Moreover, other parameters have to be introduced in order to assess the degree to which the phenomenon is studied: Geisler introduce the concept of amplitude and singularity to address the problem of isolating a significant slice out of a chain of events.

“Dynamic Morphology” is the name assigned by the author to his own approach. *Morphology* as it represents the form assumed by events and variable under consideration when linked with each other. *Dynamic* because the focus is on transformations that events and variables undergo.

The critique to extant methodology and the exposition of Geisler approach is followed by the presentation of two examples of research topics deepened by the author: evaluation of technology problem and the topic of assessing patient value in health care management.

Presenting both of them Geisler synthesise common approaches, shedding light on their biases, and sketches a re-description of the problem in terms of dynamic morphology.

In the final part of the book Geisler explicitates fundamental questions about the nature of the knowledge produced and used in organizational and managerial sciences and more in general

about the nature of the knowledge we can achieve about social phenomena.

He examines the evolutionary epistemology, founded on the principles of blind variation, selective retention and asymmetric transition.

He compares evolutionary epistemology, in its various forms, with the notion of dynamic morphology, in order to set the bedrock for a new theory of organizational knowledge, based on a cumulative and expansive vision of knowledge.

A central point in Geisler view on organizational knowledge is that theory building process has always to be linked to higher-order constructs: that way knowledge can be cumulative and expansive.

Geisler, in each part of the book, refers to a huge literature, challenging a fascinating discussion among academics and researchers, not only in organizational and managerial field but also in any other field of research dealing with social phenomena.

Chiara Piccini

(chiara.piccini@lu.unisi.ch)

Università della Svizzera italiana

Naomi Klein: *No Logo, Economia globale e nuova contestazione*. Baldini e Castoldi 2001.

Klein's book has become in a short time an international bestseller and has been translated into most western languages by important editors, showing agreements for translations among a network of editors. It has also been supported, promoted and reviewed by all the major media of the US, Canada and Europe.

Why has a book about brands become a market success? Perhaps its contents can be the reason?

My feeling is that the success of the book tells us more about brands than the book itself.

Enthusiasts of this book may not appreciate this point of view, but this is what No Logo seems to demonstrate in the end: branding is a major tool for effective communication in a world overloaded by tremendous flows of information.

Naomi Klein, a 31 years old Canadian journalist, born, raised and living in Montreal conducted a 5 years inquiry around the world. She wrote this book exploring the world of multinational companies, in particular, the way they produce goods and promote their brands.

Yet the text has a crystal clear ideological approach to the issue, so that the book has been adopted in few months as "the bible" by many activists of the "colorful" and complex world of antiglobalization.

The book is a large inquiry (over 420 pages for the Italian edition), and its 15 chapters (13 plus an introductory chapter and a concluding one) are written in a quick and easy-to-read journalistic style.

The book begins with a wide discussion of how the brands turned from being one of the elements of differentiation into the most important piece of the strategies of (all) multinational companies (intro, chapters I, II). In the third and fourth chapter the author suggest that brands influenced young people in a manipulative way in order to create a highly receptive market and how brands have been introduced in the American educational system (High Schools and Universities), through sponsoring and exclusive contracts of distribution of single brands and products (soft-drinks in particular). Further,

in chapter five Klein suggests that the growing rate of mergers and acquisitions seen on the market in these latest years are a consequence of a global strategies, aimed at imposing brands through all possible synergies with media industry and distribution channels. These synergies and in specific the single-brand stores are presented like tentative "portals" for entering the virtual world the brand built (e.g., Nike village).

Klein (chapt. VI; VII) argues that products and production processes lose their importance for the companies, which care only about the brands: She suggests that the same companies exploit both workers in their third world factories and the young employees working in their western world distribution network, bringing some evidences to support this point.

In chapters (VIII, IX, X) she reports the growing discontent of western society with a "brand dominated system", describing the formation of some movements opposing globalization of business and culture.

Chapter eleven is dedicated to 3 case histories (Shell, McDonald's, Nike) used to illustrate how multinational "globalization oriented" companies exploit and drive the globalization.

The last two chapters are dedicated to describe some achievements of the anti-globalization movements. The author argues that some of the most representative activists associations are breaking the hegemony of the brands.

Despite the claim of the author of five years research on the topic, the value of the book does not appear to be scientific consistency: the research is factual, but not "prejudice free" and often not contextualized. Several conclusions are made from generalizations of

single pieces of evidence. The result feels like a "partisan" description of the current strategies of multinational companies.

What one misses in the whole book is an answer to the questions the book itself raises in its beginning: why brands do exist and why they developed so much? Are they imposed by corporations or brands help solve visibility and information problems of customers?

I made two reflections on the causes of NOLOGO's success.

First one is made under a marketing perspective: the book's success is the consequence of a massive, highly sophisticated marketing operation. To begin with, the book has a beautiful, meaningful short title (which can be read in most western languages without any translation). Then, it is provided with a beautiful and creative design logo, patent registered and ready to become a brand (to be merchandised on t-shirts, keyholders, and booklets), built around very precise segments of customers. The book has been published when the anti global protest was breaking the news and all the international editions of No Logo have a strong coherence of identity in cover designs, which cannot be considered as accidental

My second reflection regards the corporate communication/ strategic PR. In the last ten years the development in research of PR and corporate communication has been mostly oriented to reputation management, issues management, corporate social responsibility. Efforts of practitioners as well went in these direction.

It seems indeed that the results of these efforts towards the general public are quite poor if NO LOGO can obtain such a success. More, the book is writ-

ten by a journalist, belonging to a favorite target audience for many PR practitioners.

The message from this book seems to be to reinforce efforts toward an effective communication of the policies and the real behaviors of a company. Reputation building is a priority issue, which must be included in top managers' agendas.

Isn't all this confirming that branding matters and that it can be exploited?

Simone Pizzoglio

(simone.pizzoglio@lu.unisi.ch)

Università della Svizzera italiana

Manuel Castells: *The Internet Galaxy. Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society*, Great Britain: Oxford University Press 2001.

Manuel Castells, born in Spain in 1942, is Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. Since 1983 he undertook the study of economic and social transformation associated with the information technology revolution. The results of this work were published in his trilogy *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture (1996-2000)*. He was a member of the European Commission's High Level Expert Group on the Information Society in 1995-97. In 2000/2001 he was appointed by Mr. Kofi Annan to his advisory board on Information and Communication Technologies and Global Development.

Castells is widely regarded as the leading analyst of the Information Age and the Network Society. In this short, accessible and informative book he brings his experience and knowledge to bear on Internet Galaxy.

The book is organized along a sequence of topics, covering some of the most important areas of the Internet use. Castells in the first two chapters deals with the historical and cultural process of the creation of Internet because it provides the clues to understanding what the Internet is, both as a technology and a social practice. In the third and fourth chapters he examines the role played by the Internet in the emergence of the new economy, considering the transformation of business management, capital markets and technological innovation. Chapter five and six deal with the political implications of the Internet: first, by studying new forms of citizen participation and organizing, secondly, by analyzing the issues and conflicts related to liberty and privacy in the interaction between government, business and Internet-based communication. Then, in chapter seven, in order to understand new communication patterns, Castells probes the convergence between the Internet and multimedia, exploring the formation of hypertext. The topic of the eighth chapter is the geography of the Internet: he shows what are its implications for cities, regions, and urban life. Finally he considers the inequality and social exclusion in the age of the Internet by analysing the issue of digital divide in a global perspective. He demonstrates that Internet is a fundamental instrument for development in the Third World.

In the entire book he individualizes some questions about the Internet and its capacities always with documented observations. His considerations are limited in terms of its social and cultural context. Most of the data and sources refers to North America. This for two reasons: first of all because it's the area

where Internet is most developed and also because it's the area of which we have more information. However Castells in his conclusions considers Internet and its development in other countries like, for example, Europe, South America and South Africa. In this book the reader will find a useful bibliography referring to recent publications: not only books, but also official documents, institutional reports and web sites.

The point of departure of this analysis is that people, institutions, companies, and society at large, transform technology, any technology, by appropriating it, by modifying it, by experimenting with it. Since our practice is based on communication, and the Internet changes our way of communication, our lives are deeply affected by this new technology. On the other hand, by doing many things with the Internet, we transform the Internet itself. A new socio-technical pattern emerges from this interaction.

Castells illustrates that the Internet is a particularly malleable technology, that could be deeply modified by its social practice.

Among the different topics the book deals with there are two particularly interesting: the first one is the culture of the Internet, the second one is the digital divide in a global perspective.

The culture of the Internet is an issue that has just been analyzed by many different authors, e.g. Himanen and Levy, but Castells with a sociological approach underlines with different examples the direct link between four cultural expressions and the technological development of the Internet .

By culture he intends a set of values and beliefs informing behaviour. The

Internet culture is characterized by a four-layer structure: (1) the techno-meritocratic culture, (2) the hacker culture, (3) the virtual communitarian culture, and (4) the entrepreneurial culture. The author, in detail, elaborates on the origins and characteristics of each one of these four layers.

The articulation of these four layers of the culture produced and shaped the Internet. At the top of the cultural construct that led to the creation of the Internet is the techno-meritocratic culture of scientific and technological excellence, emerging essentially from big science and the academic world.

The hacker culture specified meritocracy by strengthening the inner boundaries of the community of the technologically initiated and making it independent of the powers that be.

The appropriation of networking capacity by social networks of all sorts led to the formation of on-line communes that reinvented society and expanded computer networking in its reach and its uses. They assumed the technological values of the meritocracy, and they espoused the hackers' belief in the value of freedom, horizontal communication, and interaction networking, but they used it for their social life, rather than practicing technology for the sake of technology.

Finally, the Internet entrepreneurs discovered a new planet, populated by technological innovation, new forms of social life. Besides they would take over the world by using the power that came with this technology.

As Castells says "the culture of Internet is 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, embed-

ded in virtual networks aimed at reinventing society and materialized by money-driven entrepreneurs into the workings of the new economy" (p. 61). Together they contribute to an ideology of freedom that is widespread in the Internet world. These cultural layers are hierarchically disposed: the technomeritocratic culture becomes specified as a hacker culture by building rules and customs into networks of cooperation aimed at technological project. The virtual communitarian culture adds a social dimension to technological sharing, by making the Internet a medium of selective social interaction and symbolic belonging. The entrepreneurial culture works on top of the hacker culture, and on the communitarian culture to diffuse Internet practices in all domains of society by way of money-making. "Without the technomeritocratic culture, hackers would simply be a specific countercultural community of geeks and nerds" (p. 37). Without the hacker culture, communitarian networks in the Internet would be non different from many other alternative communes. In a similar way without the hacker culture, and communication values, the entrepreneurial culture cannot be characterized as specific to the Internet.

Castells emphasizes the link between these cultural expressions and the Internet. The key connection is the openness and free modification of Internet software, and particularly of the source code of software. "Open distribution of the source codes allows anyone to modify the code and to develop new programs and applications, in an upward spiral of technological innovation, based on cooperation and the free circulation of technical knowledge" (p. 38).

I would like to present the second topic that the reader finds in the last chapter entitled "The Digital Divide in a Global Perspective". The basic questions the author addresses are related to the positive and negative effects of new technologies and, in particularly, of Internet, in the same country or in different countries. Is it really true – so the author is questioning –, that people and countries become excluded because they are disconnected from Internet-based networks and under what conditions, and for what purposes, does inclusion/exclusion in/from Internet-base networks translate into better opportunities or greater inequality. Castells tries to respond to these and other questions concerning "the digital divide" under two different levels. First he examines the various meaning of the digital divide and their interplay with social sources of inequality. Secondly, he studies the digital divide in a global perspective, "since the differences in Internet access between countries and regions in the planet as a whole are so considerable that they actually modify the meaning of the digital divide and the kind of issues to be discussed" (pag. 248).

In the first part of the chapter Castells refers the usual meaning of "the digital divide" to inequality of access to the Internet, considering that access alone doesn't solve the problem, but is a prerequisite for inequality in a society organized around the Internet. Methodologically his deliberations are based on four reports published by the US Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) about the differential access to the Internet since 1995 in USA.

The inequality of access to the Internet is consequence in terms of in-

come, education, ethnic and gender, but it also refers to the family status of a person, to the place where he lives and to the disability. And more, it depends to the degree of telecommunications' development. For example, speed and bandwidth are, of course, essential for fulfilling the promise of the Internet.

Castells analyzes a less obvious dimension of the digital divide: the education. It's related to the digital divide basically at four levels. First, because schools are differentiated by class and race and there's a substantial difference in terms of technology among schools. Secondly because Internet access requires better teachers and the quality of the teachers is unevenly distributed among schools. Thirdly because there are differential pedagogy of schools, that want to use or not to use the Internet and fourthly because not all families, in the absence of adequate training of teachers, could instructing their children and helping them with the new technologies.

The cumulative result of these different layers of inequality translates into vast differences in the effects of Internet use on educational performance.

In the second part of the chapter the author underlines with statistical data how the level of Internet penetration in developed countries is incomparably lower from the developing world. Then he also shows that the differential use of the Internet in the developing world "is being driven by the huge gap in telecommunications infrastructure, Internet service providers, and Internet content providers, as well as by the strategies being used to deal with this gap" (p. 263). Finally he argues that social and environmental problems are not independent of the process of globalization and Internet-led economic de-

velopment. He assesses that the "new techno-economic system" seems to induce uneven development, simultaneously increasing wealth and poverty, productivity and social exclusion. And because the Internet is the heart of the new "socio-technical pattern of organization", this global process of uneven development is the most dramatic expression of the digital divide.

Castells proposes a new way to consider the digital divide. It is not measured by the number of connections to the Internet, but by the consequences of both connection and lack of connection, because the Internet – as shown in all the book – is not just a technology. It's "the technological tool and organizational form that distributes information power, knowledge generation, and networking capacity in all realms of activity" (pag. 269).

At the end of 1995, the first year of widespread use of the World Wide Web, there were about 16 million users of computer communication networks in the world. In early 2001 there were over 400 million. To notice that the influence of Internet-base networking goes beyond the number of users: it is also the quality of use. Core economic, social, political, and cultural activities throughout the planet are being structured by and around the Internet, and other computer networks. In fact, exclusion from these networks is one of the most damaging forms of exclusion in our economy and in our culture. The Internet is a communication medium that allows, for the first time, the communication of many to many, in chosen time, on a global scale. As the diffusion of the printing press in the West created what McLuhan named the "Gutenberg Galaxy", we have now entered a new world of com-

munication: the Internet Galaxy (as Castells says).

The Internet is the technological basis for the organizational form of the Information Age: the network. Networks have extraordinary advantages as organizing tools because of their inherent flexibility and adaptability. That means that the new economy is not the economy of Web industry, but of companies organized through Internet in all their activities.

The Internet is the indispensable medium and the driving force in the formation of the new economy, built around new rules and procedures of production, management, and economic calculation. It's becoming the essential communication and information medium in our society, and stands alongside electricity and the printing press as one of the greatest innovations of all time.

One of the most considerable merits of that book is that provides a systematic study of the interplay between the Internet, the economy and the society.

*Benedetta Prario,
(benedetta.prario@lu.unisi.ch)
Università della Svizzera italiana*