such as governance mechanisms, transaction costs, or corporate structures and strategies, he sees the latter as merely a surface manifestation of a deeper process, in which axial principles lodged deep within each society’s culture play the determining role.

Much of Jin’s book is given over to discussion of the existing literature on technology transfer, systems of innovation, and industrial structure, which is used largely to substantiate his general argument. These chapters are often informative and wide-ranging, if highly repetitive. Yet they fail to provide evidence that cultural paradigms have the isomorphism-generating effects the author attributes to them. Other problems too arise. Lacking any historical dimension, the book has a static and even essentialist aspect that often seems to resonate stereotypical conceptions of national character while also neglecting important intranational variations in cultural patterns. Moreover, because Jin’s approach largely sidesteps considerations of power, one can only speculate how Weberian concepts (such as patrimonial domination) might have bolstered his analysis of Japanese capitalism in particular.

Sociologists ought to welcome an effort to bring cultural meanings and symbolic constructs to bear on the analysis of knowledge creation and appropriation: indeed, this was the signal contribution of AnnaLee Saxenian’s *Regional Advantage* (Harvard University Press, 1994). What Jin has produced, however, bends the stick so far in the cultural direction as to allow organizations and institutions few if any autonomous effects. His book is the weaker as a result.


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The Internet has been described as ushering in as revolutionary an age as the industrial revolution. Although heralded initially as an inexpensive “information superhighway” that would break down earlier-established class barriers, the term “digital divide” (the alliteration needed to capture press attention) has become the fashionable term for indicating the Internet’s failure, not only to reduce gaps between the information-rich and the information-poor, but for accentuating them.

Political scientist Pippa Norris examines the issue from three perspectives: social stratification within countries, the “democratic divide” reflecting political power again within countries, and most important, the global divide threatening to exacerbate differences between northern and southern countries in socioeconomic development. Some 87% of Internet users now live in postindustrial countries, with year 2000 diffusion rates
of less than 1% in most African countries and only 3%–5% in the Czech Republic, Chile, and Mexico—compared to more than 50% in Scandinavia and North America. Norris then uses a variety of aggregate, institutional, and survey data to explore evidence of increasing and decreasing gaps from the three perspectives.

Chapters 2–5 first document that the familiar S-shaped adopter curves in the United States show initial diffusion rates as steep as those found for televisions and VCRs and steeper than those found for radio, cable television, or personal computers. Chapter 3 uses a variety of graphs to illustrate geographically the global divide in postindustrial versus developing countries. The gap is not an isolated phenomenon, but reflects parallel gaps in earlier information (television and telephones) and non-information technologies (power drills and vacation homes). There is a 0.74 correlation between GDP and percentage online, which only reduces to 0.57 in the context of other powerful aggregate predictors like education level and democratization. Thus, usually important unmeasured variables (cultural attitudes, public policy initiatives, or utility of Web content) are unlikely to add much explanatory power. Survey evidence given in chapter 4 on the social inequalities within the United States and within European countries (across various demographic factors) provides little support of a normalization thesis of more equal access, “resource-based inequalities . . . grew in significance as Internet use diffused more widely” (p. 85). Policy fixes like wired schools or community centers are unlikely to overcome these inequalities, or those that arise by gender.

Chapters 5–9 in part 2 examine the virtual political system. Surprisingly, politics and government emerge as the fourth most prevalent topic area on AltaVista, Yahoo, and Infoseek search engines, not far behind computers, sex, and television. Examining specific e-governance Web sites across the world demonstrates increased use by government agencies to distribute information and to deliver services, but little of the two-way communication required in a dynamic representative democracy. Similarly, there is an increasing presence of online parliaments to serve multiple constituencies, but still more need for user-friendly search tools, interactivity, and studies of actual use to know whether more diverse voices are being heard. While political parties “represent the most important public face of connecting with the attentive public,” only about half of major parties have Web sites, with Green Web sites tending to be most sophisticated. The emergence of “flash” antiglobalization and antigovernment movements on particular issues does demonstrate the Web’s new power for rapid political mobilization, especially for those movements emphasizing irreverent, egalitarian, and libertarian causes.

Similar libertarian and antiestablishment values are then found to be more in evidence among Internet users in the United States and Europe according to public opinion surveys (chap. 10). While Internet use per se is unlikely to have produced greater support of postmaterialist views, this aspect of cyberculture could affect the views of children and of the un-
committed as they are continually exposed to the technology. Use of the Internet for news and politics is correlated not only with use of other mass and interpersonal communication in chapter 11, but with more political activity, public information, and institutional trust. This “virtuous circle” of positively reinforcing and “activating the already active” has its downside—those least active miss out on Web information because they are least likely to seek it, to attend to it, or to trust it. Chapter 12 recapitulates the book’s three main conclusions: Established political institutions remain unimaginative in exploiting the Internet’s potential, using it instead as “corporate wallpaper”; while the Internet may be ineffective in mobilizing the disengaged, it may foster a liberalizing atmosphere for social values; and while it cannot eliminate power differentials in existing institutions, those who know how to use it wisely can make the Internet a force for positive political change.

While laudably integrating data from a rich variety of sources, not much of this may come as news for researchers familiar with the literature on mass communication effects, in which the “rich get richer” pattern is a common theme. One of its most replicated findings is the “increasing knowledge gap” illustrating audience barriers facing new communication technologies: the classic 1947 Cincinnati study showing the minimal impact of a six-month media barrage on the United Nations; Sesame Street’s inability to reduce the gap in preschool children’s literacy skills; and the studies of the dissemination of television news stories.

As in most examinations of the digital divide, Norris sees it mainly as an issue of simple access. Yet, if studies of previous technologies are any guide, equally important divides can arise in how the technology is used once access is obtained—by DSL or modem, by frequenting entertainment versus capital-building Web sites, by basic versus advanced navigational skills, and by being involved in larger social networks that can steer one to the wealth of content available online.

However, the book does provide in a single compact document a compelling summary of hard evidence that challenges many of the initial and popular evangelistic prophesies, both of how the Internet could transform society and of its inaccessibility to important disadvantaged minorities. The book also provides those beginning students in the social sciences unafraid of quantitative tables and graphs with an easy and comprehensive appreciation of the variety of rich data available to them to study the Internet—aggregate NUA data on the extent of Internet adoption and other media use around the world, Web site data available on different search engines, and public opinion data collected both by the Pew Center in the United States and by Eurobarometer in Europe. In a new field of research subject to rapid change (like the collapse of the dot-com economy), the book’s findings are unlikely to become rapidly dated.

The book might serve best as a supplementary text in a course about the Internet and society, to cover a 2–3 week period devoted to Internet politics and global issues. However, it would need to be supplemented by
case histories of successful applications of Internet strategies and of complex adoption processes in countries like China, Trinidad, or Singapore (perhaps the first fully wired country). Norris at several places in her text identifies Malaysia, Brazil, and India as countries that have adopted the Web in ways unexpected by her hard data, but she provides little explanation of how these countries managed to break the mold. Examples of how residents of non-English speaking countries manage to navigate a largely English-based universe would also prove illuminating.


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Globalization is undoubtedly one of the major issues of current debate, not only in the social sciences, but also in the political arena and in the media. Globalization is increasingly seen on the one hand as the main source of current social and political ills and on the other hand as the way to political and economical progress. Therefore, along with the mounting exposure of mega-international sporting events like the Olympics and soccer’s World Cup, it is no surprise that sport sociologists have taken an interest in the influence of globalization on sport, as well as the manner in which sport fuels globalization. Indeed, since the beginning of the 1990s, a growing body of work specializing in sociology of sport and focusing on sport and globalization has made its way into journals.

Van Bottenburg’s book is presented as a contribution to that literature. Its publication is much welcomed since it focuses on one specific issue that has by far not received enough attention in sport globalization literature, namely the international diffusion of sports. More precisely, the focus is on participation in organized sports. Therefore, the “global sport system” analyzed in this book is constituted by the 30 most widely diffused sports worldwide as defined by the international sport federations that have the most member countries. According to this system of classification, the sports most prominent in the worldwide media are not necessarily part of the global sport system. For example, professional U.S. football, baseball, ice hockey, rugby, and golf do not make the cut. According to the author, for the most part these sports are important in too few countries to be counted as global sports.

The book focuses on the popularity of sports in terms of their international diffusion, but pays much attention to class differentiation of practice within the 25 European and four non-European countries (Australia, Japan, New Zealand, United States) for which data on sport participation have been collected. Gender is not a variable considered in this book, and issues concerning women’s participation in sport are addressed.