

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE INTERNET INDUSTRY: VENTURE CAPITAL, DOT-COMS, AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, by Matthew A. Zook. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005.

This volume is the fifth in *The Information Age Series*, edited by Manuel Castells. It is based on the author's 2001 dissertation submitted to the University of California, Berkeley.

The book is implicitly divided into two parts. The first part, which comprises about one third of the book, consists of the first three chapters, and it deals with the geography of the Internet at large. The second part, consisting of chapters 4-9 focuses on the Internet industry from the perspective of venture capital.

In the first chapter we get to learn of 'the persistence of geography' in the development of the Internet despite the predicted 'death of distance', followed, in the second chapter, by a presentation of the history of the Internet, including its growing geographical spread in the US and globally. This first part of the book concludes with chapter three, which focuses on the geography of the dot-com industry in the US.

The second implicit part of the book opens with chapter four which elaborates on knowledge, types of knowledge in the information age, and concludes with a discussion of venture capital and knowledge. This chapter easily leads to the next one which attempts to connect venture capital to the geography of the Internet industry, showing through regression analysis the significant role played by venture capital in the development of the Internet industry. Chapter six, then, presents the search and selection processes performed by venture capitalists for their investments. The following chapter returns to the Internet industry by focusing on the early Internet industry and venture capital investment in it, showing that the early locations of the industry presented initial and cumulative advantage. Chapter eight provides a chronological continuation to the previous one, by describing and analyzing the boom of the dot-com industry, from the perspective of venture capital, focusing on the differences between the earlier period and the boom period in the San Francisco area. The concluding chapter, entitled 'dot-com hangover?' elaborates on the downturn of the dot-com industry as of 2000, looking also into the future. It discusses the industry as turning global, and it evaluates regional economies, noting especially the importance of human resources.

The book reads well, and its structure and flow are streamlined and focused. The book provides an important insight into one of the major elements of the Internet industry, namely venture capital, and its operational processes. As such, Zook's description and analysis may prove of essence in possibly upcoming technological-financial booms, whether of a more clustered or dispersed character. It could have been useful if the book would have concluded with a more substantial discussion in this regard. By the same token, the first part of the book would have been more contributing if it would have introduced some theoretical discussion, either directly

on the Internet, or more generally on a theory of the geography of information.

For some reason, the relatively large number of books treating the geography of the Internet, and published in recent years, have not been cited (by Cairncross, Castells, Graham and Marvin, Kellerman, Wheeler and Aoyama, Wilson and Corey). Despite these shortcomings, Zook's book provides an important contribution to the study of the Internet at large and to the geography of the Internet in particular.

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WAITING FOR RAIN: THE POLITICS AND POETRY OF DROUGHT IN NORTHEAST BRAZIL by Nicholas Gabriel Arons. The University of Arizona Press: Tucson, 2004.

This book gives a most remarkable account of people living in the drought vulnerable Northeast of Brazil, the *Nordeste*, a vast semi-arid to dry sub-humid region of 1.5 million square kilometres, which is home to one-third of Brazil's population, *i.e.* 45 million people. The young author, a graduate of Yale University, received a Fulbright scholarship for a year of study in Brazil. His aim was to investigate the impact of drought through the experience of the people by listening to them and by reading folk literature and poetry. Thus he travelled extensively through the region, using public transportation, hitching rides with farmers and living in small communities. The resulting book is not a typical social science report, but a moving description with a captivating literary style, in which three narratives are woven together: the social history of drought, the literary expressions of the people describing their suffering in social and political contexts, as well as the personal adventures of the author.

The book is composed of 17 chapters, elucidated by extensive endnotes, followed by a glossary of Portuguese words used in the text, a significant bibliography featuring many Brazilian publications and an index. The only negative items in the book are the sketches in the Preface related to global events, other continents and physical geographical aspects of drought and global warming. Here the author lacks depth and a sound judgment of complex phenomena, as he adopts a popular brush approach. It would have been better if he had omitted these items from the Preface, as it might turn readers off. Otherwise, the young writer has produced a valuable and extraordinary book.

The *Nordeste* has a long history of drought, which in 1877 caused the deaths of about half a million people, according to the most conservative historical estimations. This is the worst case recorded. The terrible 1877 drought drove the surviving people southward, away from the Northeast, which hitherto had been the political, economic, cultural and religious centre of Brazil. The large-scale emigration led to