

THE FATE OF LOCAL CULTURES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF GLOBAL COMMUNICATION

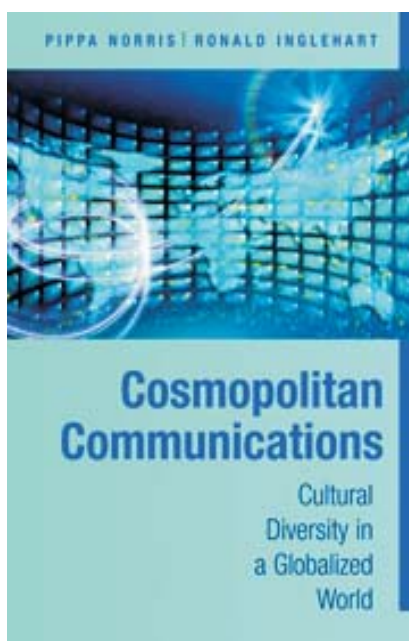
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Review of *'Cosmopolitan Communications: Cultural Diversity in a Globalized World'* by Inglehart R. and P. Norris.
New York : Cambridge University Press, 2009.

According to the 'World Map of Happiness', which was recently compiled by associates from the University of Leicester in Britain, Denmark ranks the happiest country of the 178 countries covered in the survey. The USA ranks in 23d place and Russia is on the 167th place – right between Swaziland and Pakistan.

Ronald Inglehart has long been concerned with cultural cartography. He is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan and Director of the Center for Political Research, as well as the Director of the 'World Values Survey' international project, which involves a global network of social scientists providing reviews from all continents. By referring to their data, Inglehart analyses the correlations between values and faiths, and grounds for the existence or absence of democratic institutions. He focuses on sources and forms of influences on the individual and on his self-expression, his political motivation, as well as sexual and religious norms. The combination of surveys on a certain range of topics sometimes makes up voluminous reports like 'Modernization and Post-Modernization: Cultural, Political and Economical Changes in 43 Societies' (Princeton University Press, 1997).

Among Inglehart's cartographic projects there is, for instance, the 'Cultural Map of the World' presented in the book **'Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence'** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), which is co-authored with Christian Welzel. Among his latest works is the book **'Cosmopolitan Communications: Cultural Diversity in a Globalized World'** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) is worth mentioning. It was co-authored with Pippa Norris, who teaches comparative politics at the John F. Kennedy School of



Government at Harvard University. In 2004, Inglehart and Norris published yet another book **'Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide'** through the same publishing house.

Relations between people have always been influenced by new technologies, which have affected the political atmosphere within society. The authors of the book concern themselves with the most modern technologies of the global information age. These technologies are changing the habitual borders, not only between media, but also between countries and nations. To represent all key processes of modern society, the authors offer a score of tables, diagrams and graphs, which directly or indirectly point to the fact that communications media has become global to such an extent that the numerous informational flows that have been washing the continent of 'culture' for a long time are now breaking this continent into islands, with the latter threatening to disappear in this virtual 'flood' very soon.

Inglehart and Norris warn that local communes and nation states are subject to reconfiguration under the influence of supranational, cosmo-

politan forms of communications. This can ultimately have a negative impact on cultural diversity, and lead to some kind of standardisation and commonality, which is interpreted by many people as the worst end of globalization. The authors think that the reversal of such a negative tendency is possible by means of some sort of curtain membranes or, since the process of attaining insight into the fate of culture is being carried out in light of Informational Technologies, by means of **'internetwork screens'**. These screens would operate by exercising control and filtration by set-up parameters in the cultural sphere (indeed, the first chapter of the book is called 'Firewalls'). A system of different so-called 'screens' must protect national cultures from threats to their very civilization.

The authors of the book claim to have worked out a theoretical basis for understanding cosmopolitan communications, which should enable us to determine the context in which the latter is the most dangerous for cultural diversity. In their statements, the authors rely on surveys carried out for 90 societies (from 1981 to 2007). That's why the semiotic backbone of this book is 'pyramidal'; in other words, it has a wide foundation and a narrow pointed top. The purpose of the 'Cosmopolitan communications', as with many other books of the same nature, is compound. It serves to frighten the reader slightly by identifying different negative trend lines that threaten the loss of identity of the present time, while, at the same time, bringing hope for a better future.

This better future is possible and inevitable if the book is read not only by fellow scientists and tireless producers of different similar expert reports, but also by political scientists and relevant decision makers. ■

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