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Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012.

According to data published on his website, Manuel Castells has been the most highly cited communication scholar in the years 2000–11. This positive reputation is mainly due to his trilogy *The Information Age* (1996–8) and subsequent books, such as *The Internet Galaxy* (2001) and *Communication Power* (2009). *Networks of Outrage and Hope* fits logically into this sequence of works, in which Castells' main topics were: the network society, the internet, social media as a form of communication (counter-)power. The main focus of his new book is the role of social media and communication power in the social movements that emerged during 2011.

Each chapter focuses on movements in specific countries or regions: Tunisia and Iceland, the Egyptian revolution, the Arab spring, the 15-M movement in Spain, Occupy Wall Street in the USA. A concluding chapter tries to generalize the main insights. Castells argues that social media are tools for the construction of communicative autonomy from power structures, that these media facilitated the creation of occupied spaces and the communication of the emotions of outrage and hope so that collective action could emerge, and that contemporary social movements have an online and an offline dimension.

In a debate on the political implications of social media, authors such as Clay Shirky have argued that the net effect of social media is that they enhance freedom, whereas others (e.g. Malcolm Gladwell, Evgeny Morozov, Jodi Dean) have pointed out that social media 'slacktivism' involves weak ties and low risks, which limit the actual political impacts of social media, make middle-class liberals feel good and are the ideal kind of activism for a lazy generation that avoids taking political risks. No matter how one positions oneself in this controversy, one has to acknowledge its relevance. Castells' book can be read as a positioning in this discourse.

Formulations, such as the ones that the 2011 movements 'emerged from calls from the Internet and wireless communication networks' (p. 106), were 'born on the Internet, diffused by the Internet, and maintained its presence on the Internet' (p. 168), that 'networked social movements of our time are largely based on the Internet' and that 'it is through these digital communication networks that the movements live and act' (p. 229) have a strong focus on the power of technology and imply that without the internet there would have been no revolutions in the Arab world and no Occupy movements. The reasoning in Castells' book lacks empirical evidence and grounding in a theoretical model of the contradictory implications that the media have for social movements in a

contradictory society. That the logic ‘protest = created, organized, maintained, orchestrated by the Internet’ has a flaw is not only shown by the fact that regimes have monitored the internet and digital media with the help of surveillance technologies supplied by western corporations, which has resulted in the torture of activists, but also by the circumstance that the Egyptian protests continued and culminated in a revolution also after the Mubarak regime had turned off the internet on 28 January 2011.

Castells justifies the lack of empirical evidence by saying that he merely wants to offer hypotheses for discussion and that it is too early to draw conclusions. On the theoretical level, however, Castells draws conclusions with quite far-reaching consequences, such as the sharing of the techno-euphoristic and techno-deterministic celebration of social media’s power that in popular discourse has resulted in metaphors such as Facebook/Twitter revolution and revolution 2.0. Castells provides an intellectual underpinning for this hyperbolic ideology.

Based on 80 interviews conducted with activists in the USA, Egypt, Spain, the United Kingdom, Tunisia and Greece, Paolo Gerbaudo’s (2012) book *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* shows that Castells’ claim that the internet facilitated ‘leaderless movements’ (p. 224) is highly questionable and that social networks do not automatically imply the end of hierarchies.

Castells fails to provide adequate ‘theoretical tools’ (p. 17) because his approach lacks grounding in social philosophy and the history of theoretical concepts and social theory. I have argued (Fuchs, 2009), in a reflection on Castells’ *Communication Power* (2009), that he neglects the history and variety of definitions of theoretical concepts such as power. His new book lacks a theoretical model of social movement media that is grounded in social theory, does not adequately explore the implications of contradictions between commercial and non-commercial media for social movements, and does not provide systematic theoretical justifications for the use of certain definitions. It also lacks awareness of concepts’ origin. This becomes clear when Castells describes the 15-M movement as a rhizomatic revolution (pp. 140–5) without ever mentioning the names Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and without referencing their works and their subsequent application to internet studies, instead giving a definition of rhizomes ‘[a]ccording to Wikipedia’ (p. 147, fn 8).

Castells’ political bottom line is that there is a return of class struggle (p. 194), but in forms that do not (and in his view should not!) question capitalism (p. 197). Anti-capitalism (and consequently socialism) would be ‘ideologies of the past’ (p. 197). At the moment, there is no data available that allows drawing conclusions about the worldviews of Occupy activists. Castells quotes data that refer to the general US population (p. 290) or US citizens who sympathize with the Occupy movement (p. 197). From the data he provides, however, one cannot draw conclusions about the activists’ worldviews. Castells does not in this respect remain empirically agnostic, but draws the premature conclusion that this movement is not anti-capitalist without providing evidence for this inference. His conclusions about what contemporary movements stand for seem to reflect more his own personal liberal political ideology, a judgement that is not necessarily out of place in an academic work (because politics influences the way we think, act and write), but should be made explicit as normative judgement and not dressed up with data that do not support what he says they explain.

A global survey found that in 2009, '74% of 29 000 respondents in 27 countries are critical of neoliberal capitalism', whereas in 2005 63% favoured the free market economy.¹ The Pew Global Attitudes Project found that in 2012, in half of the 21 surveyed countries, only half or less than half of the people believe that most people are better off in a free market economy.² The agreement to capitalism is especially low in crisis-ridden countries such as Spain (47%), Greece (44%), Egypt (50%) and Tunisia (42%). There is a widespread discontent with capitalism. In contrast, Castells' conclusion that contemporary rebellions are cultural movements with new values (p. 231) and movements for real democracy (p. 124) neglect the significant role that issues of class and capitalism play in these movements, which makes them different from the so-called new social movements. For Castells, the current crisis is in the last instance mainly political in character, which implies that more regulation will fix everything. This assumption neglects the power of the capitalist economy and that at the heart of this crisis lies a fundamental class conflict that has resulted in wage repression and an explosion of income and wealth inequalities that have driven indebtedness and financialization. The contemporary crisis shows that the dream of liberal-democratic welfare capitalism is over and was always riven with contradictions. We require another democratic dream and the power to dare to dream differently. And what if the contemporary movements are not an expression of the 'love between social activism and political reformism' (p. 237), but rather show that facing the reality of capitalist power, 'the world has long since dreamed of something of which it needs only to become conscious for it to possess it in reality' (Marx, 1843)?

If philosophers interpret the world, but the point is to change it, then changing the world requires among many things also its understanding. And some books require more interpretation of the world in order to provide an understanding of how the world changes. *Networks of Outrage and Hope* is one of these books.

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Notes

1. Global survey: 74% critical of neoliberal capitalism. Available at: <http://coto2.wordpress.com/2009/12/31/74-critical-of-neoliberal-capitalism/> (accessed 8 December 2012).
2. Pew Global Attitudes Project: Pervasive gloom about the world economy. Available at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/07/12/pervasive-gloom-about-the-world-economy/> (accessed 9 December 2012).

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