

*Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age.* By Manuel Castells. Polity Press, 2015. 328 pp. \$11.21. ISBN: 978-0745695761.

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As I compose this review, hundreds of social movements have just erupted and others have continued since the first publication of this book in 2012. Now in its second edition, this book by Manuel Castells Oliván, a Spanish researcher of the information society, communication, and globalization and a professor of sociology at UC Berkeley, does not only trace social movements and revolutions across borders in 2011 but also provides assessment of these movements (two years after their eruption) and adds insightful analyses of different social movements that took place between 2013-2014. Castells attempts to find commonalities between these movements, answers what triggers them, and sheds light on the important role of digital technologies (namely, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter...etc.) in affecting change—whether this change happens in the minds of people, whether tangible, or whether desirable or not. What is unique in this book is its emphasis on the internet, not as a material instrument but as powerful communication tool that facilitates and diffuses social movements.

Organized chronologically rather than topically, Castells's book analyzes the Arab Uprising, Icelandic revolution, the *Indignadas* movement in Spain, Occupy Wall Street in the United States that took place in 2011. Castells, then devotes two chapters to discuss social movements that took place between 2012-2014 such as: the Turkish movement, the demonstrations in Brazil, The Student Movement in Chile, the Mexican Movement #YoSoy132, as well as Five Stars Movement in Italy. For Castells, it is all started in Tunisia and Iceland, then diffused to Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Spain, and the United States. While Egypt took its cues from Tunisia, Spain took its cues from Iceland; and ultimately, New Yorkers took

their cues from Egypt and Spain. What connects all these people together, according to Castells, is their “feeling” of disgust of dictatorship, and political and economic corruption.

The strongest chapter, in my opinion, is “The Egyptian Revolution” because it is the only chapter that helps us see Castells’s “theory of power” in practice. Based on Castells’s book *Communication Power* (2009), this theory proposes that for every power (manipulation, coercion, violence), there is a counterpower (a challenge of these powers). And since counterpower is created in people’s minds and channeled through interaction, and social and digital networks, governments strive to limit or eradicate these networks. This is exactly what happened during the Egyptian revolution. We learn about the “counterpower” of the internet in the Egyptian revolution that started with Asmaa Mahfouz’s vlog on her Facebook page, encouraging Egyptians to protest against police brutality. We also learn about Egyptians’ online activism that helped expose the government’s violence in an “unedited form” (60). Yet, according to Castells, what makes the Egyptian revolution exceptional is not its reliance on the internet alone but on its use of what Castells calls “multimodal networks of power” that include but not limited to mobile phones, television, Friday mosques gatherings, and the occupation of a public space like Tahrir Square. All these counterpowers cannot but hinder the government’s power (whether economic power, military power, or religious power) to stop the revolution or even to block social media websites and censor media inside Egypt.

The following chapters build on Castells’s concept of social diffusion. For instance, “A Rhizomatic Revolution: *Indignadas* in Spain” stresses that *Indignadas* movement is mainly inspired by Iceland’s example as well as the Arab Uprising’s. Drawing on Isidora Chacon’s concept of rhizomatic revolutions, Castells highlights that the *Indignadas* movement and its call for real democracy, spread like a rhizome—thanks to the internet. In his footnote, Castells

defines rhizome, according to Wikipedia, as “a characteristically horizontal stem of a plant that is unusually found underground, often sending out roots from its nodes...” (150). Similarly, *Indignadas* movement, for Castells, is rhizomatic because it is a “horizontal” movement, with no center, no goals, and no leaders. Despite the vague results of this movement, Castells strongly agrees that the “process is the product” (147).

In “Occupy Wall Street: Harvesting the Salt of the Earth” Castells again tells us about the “outrage” (that was “in the air”) that found its way to Facebook, Twitter, Livestreams, and YouTube videos; and, ultimately led people to come together and occupy Wall Street. The most interesting aspect in this chapter is Castells’s analogy between Gandhi’s “salt of the earth” and the protestors’ march to occupy Wall Street. While Gandhi marches to the ocean to collect salt and challenges the British empire, the protestors march “peacefully” to challenge political and financial institutions in America—despite the seemingly vague results of the movement. For Castells, the movement proved to be slow but it went far, like a rhizome.

Though often criticized for its naïve or utopian vision of social movements and revolutions, Castells’s book does help us understand that all the change we see today in the world was sparked, first and foremost, by utopian visions. Castells succeeds both in mapping different social movements across time and space and in providing evidence to show that people’s “powerlessness” always turned into “empowerment” through the use of the internet (72). Also, the book proves to be based on Castells’s own “personal” observation and analysis, as he claims in the beginning of the book. Some of these observations are: the internet does not “cause” revolutions but rather functions as an empowerment for activists to lead revolutions, regardless of the outcomes; and, once revolutions find their way to the internet, there is no going

back. By the end of this book, readers realize the power of “the counterpower”—the internet—that cannot be controlled, limited, or eradicated.

The overarching thread that ties all the chapters of the book together is the concept of the diffusion of social movements. Clarity, however, could have been added to this concept to avoid confusion. Anyone who has studied linguistics will find the term diffusion loaded with different meanings. Linguistically speaking, the notion of diffusion of social movements implies that there is an “invisible hand” behind this diffusion across borders. But, if the diffusion stems from the use of the internet, then I think it would be wrong to compare the internet with an “invisible hand” because the internet is a visible, tangible, “real” hand. On the other hand, scholars who have studied rhetoric will find it very interesting to read this book because it implicitly equates social movements and revolutions to rhetoric, a phenomenon happening across time and space, an unfinished product, or an emotion/a feeling of hope and outrage translated into action through the employment of the internet. The book ends on a powerful note, an advice to the world, or maybe an articulation of Castells’s hope for “re-learning how to live together. In real democracy” (316). All indications show that this book, no doubt, is worth reading. Castells writes in a language that everyone can understand, and he ends his chapters with notes and numerous sources for us to check for more information. This book is also a substantial addition to those who work in the field of communication and political science.