

Some Reflections on Manuel Castells' Book *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age*.

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Abstract: This paper provides critical reflections on Manuel Castells' (2012) book *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age* that analyses the "nature and perspectives of networked social movements" (p. 4) and gives special focus to the role of "social media" in movements that emerged in 2011 in Tunisia, Iceland, Egypt, Spain and the United States. I situate Castells' book in an intellectual discourse that focuses on the political implications of social media and that has involved Clay Shirky, Malcolm Gladwell and Evgeny Morozov. The article also discusses the role of social theory and empirical research in Castells' book, presents as an alternative a theoretical model of the relationship between social movements and the media, discusses the implications that some empirical data that focus on social media in the Egyptian revolution and the Occupy Wall Street movement have for Castells' approach, discusses how Castells positions himself towards capitalism and compares his explanation of the crisis and his political views to David Harvey's approach.

Keywords: social movements, social media, Internet, protest, revolution, occupation, Arab spring, 15-M, indignadas, indignados, Occupy Wall Street, Manuel Castells, network, Networks of outrage and hope. Social movements in the Internet age.

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1. Introduction

The year 2011 will be remembered in history. It was a year of persistent global crisis and in this respect not different from the preceding years 2008, 2009 and 2010. What made 2011 special is that it was a year of revolutions, major protests, riots and the emergence of various social movements. Alain Badiou (2012) argues in this context that 2011 was the year of the rebirth of history. Liberal ideology has for a long time tried to make people believe that we have reached a Fukayamian end of history and that capitalism is the bottom line of history, but contemporary movements show that there is no end of history and that thinking about alternatives to existing regimes of domination and exploitation is possible and necessary. Slavoj Žižek (2012) adds to Badiou's analysis that 2011 was the year of dreaming dangerously – the year, in which people dared to try to make dreams of a different world reality. History proved liberalism wrong. Contemporary social movements are the subjects that can convince us that it is still possible to, as Marx (1859) said, see the "bourgeois mode of production [...] [as] the last antagonistic form of the social process of production" so that in the sublation of this mode of societal organisation the "prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation". The new revolutionary movements show that "the world has long since dreamed of something of which it needs only to become conscious for it to possess it in reality" (Marx 1843b). 2011 was a year, where dreams of a different world were put into political practice. Naturally, such developments are reflected in the intellectual realm by the publication of books that reflect on the causes, implications and consequences of the emergence of social movements.

Manuel Castells' *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age* is one of these books. What is specific for this book is that it is especially concerned with the role of the Internet and "social media" in the 2011 rebellions and revolutions. One question that arises when taking a look at the book's front page is if we really live in an "Internet age". The subtitle implies that the Internet is the central feature of contemporary society, although one can think of different features, such as inequality, class, capitalism or crisis and therefore of different subtitles such as "Social movements in the new age of class inequality", "Social movements in the age of capitalist crisis", etc. Yet Castells and/or his publisher has/have chosen the term "Internet age", which is an indication that the book gives special attention to digital media, which makes it distinct from a lot of other books that cover the current crisis and contemporary social movements. But at the same time using terms such as "Internet age", "Internet society" (Bakardjieva 2005¹) or "cybersociety" (Jones 1998) advances a media- and technology-centrism that ignores the multidimensionality of society, i.e. that we live in capitalist societies, information societies, hyperindustrial societies, crisis-ridden societies etc at the same time.

What is specific for Castells' book is that it especially focuses on the role of the Internet in contemporary movements and rebellions. That he sees a special importance of the Internet in contemporary politics and political transformations is not only indicated by the use of the term "Internet age" in the subtitle, but also by the use of the term networks in the main title, which focuses on the double interconnected meaning of networks as social networks between humans and the Internet as global network of computer networks. The notion of the network that Castells employs in the title of his book has a double meaning: it indicates that the book engages with a) the social networks of activists and b) the role of the Internet as global network of computer networks in social movements. One can have doubts if we live in the Internet age: 34.3% of the world population use the Internet², which makes it important to study its societal implications, just like the average global television coverage rate of 87.2%³ makes it important to study the implications of TV for society. Media-wise, we live in an Internet age just like we live in the age of TV, radio, newspapers, mobile phones, etc. But taking a media- or communication-centric position neglects the broader context of society, its political economy. One can therefore question the move to speak of a "media age".

The purpose of Castells' book is "to suggest some hypotheses, grounded on observation, on the nature and perspectives of networked social movements, with the hope of identifying the new paths of social change in our time, and to stimulate a debate on the practical (and ultimately political) implications of these hypotheses" (Castells 2012, 4). The work consists of eight chapters⁴: The introduction is followed by a chapter that focuses on reactions to the global crisis in Tunisia and Iceland. Chapter 3 covers the Egyptian revolution, chapter 4 discusses the Arab spring, chapter 5 the 15-M movement in Spain, chapter

¹ Maria Bakardjieva does not claim in her book that contemporary society should be characterised as or termed an "Internet society". But book titles have relevance, they matter in themselves because they convey meanings about the normative assessments some people (such as publishers or authors) want us to make about society. They also raise certain expectations of potential readers and ultimately influence the decision to (purchase or not purchase a book. So even if a book does not claim that we live in an Internet society, but has a title that implies that we do, choosing such a title should be subject to criticism.

² <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm> (accessed on December 7th, 2012)

³ The latest available data for TV coverage rates reported in the database of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics are from 2005 (<http://stats.uis.unesco.org>). They refer to 57 countries. I calculated the average coverage rate for these 57 countries. The individual coverage rates range from 100% in countries like Australia, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy or Iceland at the upper end and 22.8% in China, 20% in Bhutan and Tanzania and 19% in Mauritania at the lower end. The calculated share is a country average. Taking a weighting by population size into account, 67.7% of a total of 3702082639 individuals covered in the statistics have access to TV. The circumstance that only little more than 22% of the Chinese population had access to television in 2005 has special weight in the calculation.

⁴ Note that there is no numbering of chapters in the book. For creating a better overview, I have introduced chapter numbers for the purpose of this article.

6 Occupy Wall Street. Chapter 7 generalizes the insights from chapters 2-6 and gives an analysis of the movements as a whole. Chapter 8 is a brief postface.

Castells bases his new work on the preceding book *Communication Power. Networks of Outrage and Hope* is an application of his earlier work to the social movements that emerged in 2011. Some of the main themes are that communication power is the central form of power today (p. 5), that the Internet allows the construction of communicative autonomy (p. 9), that contemporary movements' use of the Internet has facilitated the creation of occupied spaces, that the Internet allows movements to communicate the emotions of outrage and hope that are needed for switching from collective emotions to collective action (pp. 11-17), and that contemporary social movements are online and offline socially networked movements (pp. 221-228), for which social media are of crucial importance.

I want to contextualize Castells' book by first introducing a controversy that focuses on the role of "social media" in politics.

2. Social Media and Politics: A Controversy between Clay Shirky, Malcolm Gladwell and Evgeny Morozov

The rise of blogs (e.g. Wordpress, Blogspot, Tumblr), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Diaspora*, VK), microblogs (e.g. Twitter, Weibo), wikis (e.g. Wikipedia) and content sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Flickr, Instagram) has resulted in public discussions on the implications of these media for the political realm. There are on the one hand more optimistic and on the other hand more sceptical views.

The techno-optimistic position sees mainly positive impacts of social media on politics and infers that social media strengthen democracy and the public sphere. It is typically expressed in metaphors such as "Twitter revolution" or "Facebook rebellions". It became first popular when the conservative blogger Andrew Sullivan's claimed that the "revolution will be twittered" in the context of the 2009 Iran protests: "You cannot stop people any longer. You cannot control them any longer. They can bypass your established media; they can broadcast to one another; they can organize as never before. It's increasingly clear that Ahmadinejad and the old guard mullahs were caught off-guard by this technology and how it helped galvanize the opposition movement in the last few weeks" (Sullivan 2009). Notions related to the concept of "Twitter revolution" are e.g. "revolution 2.0" (e.g. Ghonim 2012) and "Facebook revolution" (e.g. Smith 2012, Vargas 2012).

Sullivan's reduction of rebellions' causes to social media echoed a certain type of management gurus' and media observers' discourse that had emerged in the middle of the first decade of the new millennium. For example, Clary Shirky argued in 2008 that the political use of "social media" ultimately enhances freedom: "Social tools create what economists would call a positive supply-side shock to the amount of freedom in the world. [...] To speak online is to publish, and to publish online is to connect with others. With the arrival of globally accessible publishing, freedom of speech is now freedom of the press, and freedom of the press is freedom of assembly" (Shirky 2008, 172). Whereas one assumption in this discourse is that new media have predominantly positive effects, another one is that they bring about radical change: "Our social tools are dramatically improving our ability to share, cooperate, and act together. As everyone from working biologists to angry air passengers adopts those tools, it is leading to an epochal change" (Shirky 2008, 304).

In response to the techno-euphoria about social media, Malcolm Gladwell (2010) argued that activists in revolutions and rebellions risk their lives and risk becoming victims of violence conducted by the police or the people their protest is directed at. Taking the courage to face these dangers would require strong social ties and friendships with others in the movement. Activism would involve high risks. "The kind of activism associated with social media isn't like this at all. The platforms of social media are built around weak ties" (Gladwell 2010, 45). Facebook and Twitter activism would only succeed in situations that

do not require “to make a real sacrifice” (Gladwell 2010, 47), such as registering in a bone-marrow database or getting back a stolen phone. “The evangelists of social media”, such as Clay Shirky, “seem to believe that a Facebook friend is the same as a real friend and that signing up for a donor registry in Silicon Valley today is activism in the same sense as sitting at a segregated lunch counter in Greensboro in 1960” (Gladwell 2010, 46). Social media would “make it easier for activists to express themselves, and harder for that expression to have any impact” (Gladwell 2010, 49). Social media “are not a natural enemy of the status quo” and “are well suited to making the existing social order more efficient” (Gladwell 2010, 49).

Evgeny Morozov (2009) speaks in line with Gladwell’s argument of slacktivism as “feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact. It gives those who participate in ‘slacktivist’ campaigns an illusion of having a meaningful impact on the world without demanding anything more than joining a Facebook group. [...] ‘Slacktivism’ is the ideal type of activism for a lazy generation: why bother with sit-ins and the risk of arrest, police brutality, or torture if one can be as loud campaigning in the virtual space?”. Morozov (2010) argues that the notion of “Twitter revolution” is based on a belief in cyber-utopianism – “a naive belief in the emancipatory nature of online communication that rests on a stubborn refusal to acknowledge its downside” (Morozov 2010, xiii) that combined with Internet-centrism forms a techno-deterministic ideology. Jodi Dean (2005) says that slacktivism results in post-politics: “Busy people can think they are active – the technology will act for them, alleviating their guilt while assuring them that nothing will change too much. [...] By sending an e-mail, signing a petition, responding to an article on a blog, people can feel political. And that feeling feeds communicative capitalism insofar as it leaves behind the time-consuming, incremental and risky efforts of politics. [...] It is a refusal to take a stand, to venture into the dangerous terrain of politicization” (Dean 2005, 70).

In an article that can be read as a kind of response to criticism, Clay Shirky (2011, 29), mentioning both Gladwell and Morozov, acknowledges that the use of social media “does not have a single preordained outcome”. Social media would be “coordinating tools for nearly all of the world’s political movements, just as most of the world’s authoritarian governments (and, alarmingly, an increasing number of democratic ones) are trying to limit access to it” (Shirky 2011, 30). Shirky admits that there are attempts to control, censor and monitor social media, but argues at the same time that these attempts are unlikely to be successful in the long run and that social media are “long-term tools that can strengthen civil society and the public sphere” (Shirky 2011, 32).

Social media would facilitate shared awareness and result in “the dictator’s dilemma”/“the conservative dilemma” (Shirky 2011, 36): “The dilemma is created by new media that increase public access to speech or assembly; with the spread of such media, whether photocopiers or Web browsers, a state accustomed to having a monopoly on public speech finds itself called to account for anomalies between its view of events and the public’s. The two responses to the conservative dilemma are censorship and propaganda. But neither of these is as effective a source of control as the enforced silence of the citizens. The state will censor critics or produce propaganda as it needs to, but both of those actions have higher costs than simply not having any critics to silence or reply to in the first place. But if a government were to shut down Internet access or ban cell phones, it would risk radicalizing otherwise pro-regime citizens or harming the economy” (Shirky 2011, 36f).

Shirky sees two sides of social media, but argues that the positive side overdetermines the negative one and that in the last instance social media have positive effects on democracy. So although acknowledging contradictions in order to make his argument more complex, Shirky postulates the techno-deterministic equation: social media = more democracy = more freedom. Shirky (2001, 38) argues that the slacktivism argument is irrelevant because “the fact that barely committed actors cannot click their way to a better world does not mean that committed actors cannot use social media effectively”.

In a response to Shirky, Gladwell wrote that Shirky “has to convince readers that in the absence of social media, those uprisings would not have been possible“ (Gladwell and Shirky 2011, 153). Shirky answered that “social media allow insurgents to adopt new strategies“ that are crucial, “allow committed groups to play by new rules“ and that “as with the printing press“, social media “will result in a net improvement for democracy“ (Gladwell and Shirky 2011, 154). So asked for clarification, Shirky confirmed the view that, although acknowledging complexity, the formula remains in the last instance “the Internet = increase of democracy“.

Based on this discussion, we can next approach the question of how Castells positions his analysis in respect of this social media-controversy.

3. Castells on Social Media in the Context of Protests and Revolutions: The Dimension of Social Theory

Castells (2012, 2) argues that we live in a network society and that therefore “movements spread by contagion in a world networked by the wired Internet“. Revolutions would be connected to economic, political, military, ideological and cultural contradictions of power (Castells 2012, 79; see also p. 12), but they could only form if there are the emotions of hope and outrage and these emotions are communicated to others on a large-scale (Castells 2012, 14). A “condition for individual experiences to link up and form a movement is the existence of a communication process that propagates the events and the emotions attached to it. [...] In our time, multimodal digital networks of horizontal communication are the fastest and most autonomous, interactive, reprogrammable and self-expanding means of communication in history. [...] the networked social movements of the digital age represent a new species of social movement“ (Castells 2012, 15). Castells is certainly correct in stressing that for a protest movement or revolution to emerge, there need to be objective conditions (problems in society) and subjective insight into these conditions, i.e. the perception of a mass of people that the objective conditions are unbearable and that society therefore needs to be changed by them and that this requires their collective political action (Fuchs 2006). This is precisely what Marx stressed when saying that revolutions require a material basis (the contradictions of the economy, politics, ideology and nature that shape an antagonistic society), but that the idea of revolution can only be realized if the contradictions of reality become subjective insights that motivate practices: “For revolutions require a passive element, a material basis. Theory is fulfilled in a people only insofar as it is the fulfilment of the needs of that people. [...] Will the theoretical needs be immediate practical needs? It is not enough for thought to strive for realization, reality must itself strive towards thought“ (Marx 1843a). Revolution is therefore always a change of society and a change of the human self: “The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice“ (Marx 1845).

The question, which role the Internet and social media play or do not play in spreading outrage and hope, is more an empirical than a theoretical question. We need theoretical concepts of how to define a1) social movements, b1) protests, c1) revolutions and models that allow understanding the factors that are involved in the emergence and constraints of a2) social movements, b2) protests and c2) revolutions. Such theoretical models are general in character, but they can, due to the highly contingent nature of collective action (Crossley 2002, 188), not give an explanation of the exact causes and point of time of the emergence of a specific social movement protest or revolution. Theoretical models are required for providing a general typology of the whole of factors that can influence the emergence and development of social movements, protests and revolutions. The emergence of a social movement presupposes societal problems as a material base. Protest is a negation of existing structures that result in frictions and problems and a political struggle that aims at the transformation of certain aspects of society or of society as a whole. Neither the aggravation of problems nor the structural opening of new political opportuni-

ties or the increase of resources for protest movements results automatically in protest. The transition in the Soviet Union and the student movement of 1968 are examples of protests in situations of increasing political opportunities and resources, whereas the emergence of the labour movement and the anti-globalization movement can be considered as reactions to aggravating societal stratifications.

Only if societal problems are perceived as problems and if this perception guides practices, can protest emerge. Hence “cognitive liberation” and rebellious consciousness are necessary (McAdam 1982). The difference between objective structures and subjective expectations is an important aspect of protest. “When the ‘fit’ between objective structures and subjective expectations is broken the opportunity for critical reflection and debate upon previously unquestioned assumptions is made possible” (Crossley 2002, 185). Protest presupposes societal problems, the perception of these problems as problems by human actors, the assessment that these problems are unbearable and moral indignation that activates and mobilizes practices. That a problem is perceived as a problem that should be solved doesn’t automatically result in the emergence of protest, but maybe in attempts to organize protest. Such attempts are only successful if possibilities and resources for protest can be found and mobilised. Protest is a complex societal phenomenon, whose emergence and outcome cannot be predicted based on a theoretical model. Rather, theoretical models can be used for studying the causes and implications of social movements in a retroactive manner. If we want to understand the role of media in specific social movements, protests and revolutions – such as the ones analysed in Castells’ book –, then we need a general theoretical model of mediated communication in social movements, protests and revolutions and empirical studies that are grounded in these models. Castells book, as I want to show, fails on both the level of theory and the level of empirical research.

There is a potential for contagion effects that communicate and intensify emotions of discontent and the desire for collective action, but the Internet certainly is not the only means for communicating the need for protest. Castells (2012, 45) argues that in Tunisia and Iceland “the movement went from cyberspace to urban space” and that in the Egyptian revolution “the original spaces of resistance were formed on the Internet” (Castells 2012, 56). He says that in Egypt the activists “planned the protests on Facebook, coordinated them through Twitter, spread them by SMSs and webcast them to the world on YouTube” (Castells 2012, 58). Emotions of the need for protest and revolution would have spread on the Internet and then resulted in street protests: “The Internet provided the safe space where networks of outrage and hope connected. Networks formed in cyberspace extended their reach to urban space” (Castells 2012, 81).

Castells furthermore claims that the 2011 uprisings in Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara and Yemen were “conveyed by images and messages arriving from the Internet” (Castells 2012, 94), that “Internet networks provided a space of autonomy from where the movements emerged” (Castells 2012, 103) and that “the Arab uprisings were spontaneous processes of mobilization that emerged from calls from the Internet and wireless communication networks” (Castells 2012, 106). Castells uses a comparable, although less explicitly Internet-centred, language for describing the Spanish 15-M movement – also known as the indignados/indignadas movement – in chapter 5. Chapter 6 discusses the Occupy movement: Castells says that it “was born on the Internet, diffused by the Internet, and maintained its presence on the Internet” and that its “material form of existence was the *occupation of public space*” (Castells 2012, 168). Social “networks on the Internet allowed the experience to be communicated and amplified, bringing the entire world into the movement” (Castells 2012, 169).

Castells puts a very strong emphasis on the mobilization capacities of the Internet. His argument implies that in the studied cases, Internet communication created street protests, which means that without the Internet there would have been no street protests. In the concluding chapter, Castells generalises for all analysed movements: “The networked

social movements of our time are largely based on the Internet, a necessary though not sufficient component of their collective action. The digital social networks based on the Internet and on wireless platforms are decisive tools for mobilizing, for organizing, for deliberating, for coordinating and for deciding” (Castells 2012, 229).

Formulations such as the ones that the Internet resulted in the emergence of movements, that movements were born on the Internet, that protested were conveyed by the Internet, or that movements are based on the Internet, convey a logic that is based on overt technological determinism: technology is conceived as an actor that results in certain phenomena that have societal characteristics. Castells fails to see that not the Internet creates social, but human actors who are embedded into antagonistic economic, political and ideological structures of society. The Internet is a techno-social system consisting of social networks that make use of a global network of computer networks. It is embedded into the antagonisms of contemporary society and therefore has no in-built effects or determinations. Collective social action that makes use of the Internet can have relatively little effects or dampen or intensify existing trends. The actual implications depend on contexts, power relations, resources, mobilization capacities, strategies and tactics as well as the complex and undetermined outcomes of struggles. Castells model is simplistic: social media results in revolutions and rebellions. He shares the widespread ideological talk about “Twitter revolutions” and “Facebook rebellions” that, as already discussed, became first popular when the conservative blogger Andrew Sullivan’s (2009) claimed that the “revolution will be twittered” in the context of the 2009 Iran protests.

Castells (2012, 229) argues that “it is through these digital communication networks that the movements live and act, certainly in interaction with face-to-face communication and with the occupation of urban space“. But if digital media form, as implied by Castells, the brains of contemporary social movements, then their blockage must result in the movements’ ends. This assumption has been falsified by the circumstance that after the Egyptian regime shut off the Internet on January 28th, 2011, the protests that later led to a revolution continued.

Castells writes that “the more the movement is able to convey its message over the communication networks, the more citizen consciousness rises, and the more the public sphere of communication becomes a contested terrain” (Castells 2012, 237). He here assumes a linear connection between the technical availability of political information and the change of collective consciousness and the rise of political protests in a direct proportional manner. But society’s reality is more complex than this simple behaviouristic model (Internet as stimulus, critical consciousness and political action as response) suggests. Information can be online without reaching many citizens, e.g. because they do not know of its existence, because the information is structurally kept invisible, because they are not interested in it or do not find it meaningful. The Internet and media in general can also be shut down or censored and those who run them imprisoned, tortured or killed. These are not infrequent practices on the part of states in order to contain protest movements. Castells also underestimates the actual or potential role that ideologies can play in heteronomous societies: the rise of critical consciousness can be forestalled if powerful groups manage to convince the mass of people that the problems in society are different from their actual causes. Historically, ideology has mainly achieved this aim by constructing scapegoats, such as the Jew, the black person, the immigrant, the socialist, the communist etc that are blamed for the existence of problems in society. Even if alternative information is available on media networks and challenges ideologies, there is no guarantee that citizens to a large extent challenge ideology. It is possible to break widespread beliefs in ideologies if struggles not only take on material form, but are also struggles for alternative ideas that become material forces.

The Internet access rate in the countries that Castells discusses varies between 3.1% (Mauritania) and 97.8% (Iceland), the Facebook usage rate between 2.6% of the population (Yemen) and 69.1% (Iceland) (see table 1). Given such quite different conditions of Internet usage, the question arises if one can really so easily generalise, as Castells does,

that the Internet and social media created and amplified revolutions and rebellions. Data on media use in the Egyptian revolution show that the revolutionaries considered phone communication and face-to-face talk as much more important for spreading information than “social media” (Wilson and Dunn 2011). In December 2011, 26.4% of the Egyptian population had access to the Internet and in June 2012, 13.6% of the Egyptian population were Facebook users (data source: internetworldstats.com, accessed on October 28th, 2012). The Facebook page **كلنا خالد سعيد** (“We are all Khaled Said”) that has been moderated by Wael Ghonim (see Ghonim 2012) is said to have played a role in spreading the protests after Khaled Said was beaten to death by Egyptian police forces on June 6th, 2010. It had 2.5 million likes (Arab version; English version: 278 000) on December 8th, 2012. It is however unclear how many of the likes come from Egyptian users that participated in the Tahrir Square occupation and protests.

Country	Internet access rate (%)	Facebook usage rate (% of population)
Algeria	13.4%	9.5%
Bahrain	77%	30.0%
Egypt	26.4%	13.6%
Greece	46.9%	33.1%
Iceland	97.8%	69.1%
Jordan	38.1%	38.1%
Kuwait	74.2%	31.2%
Lebanon	52.0%	38.0%
Libya	5.9%	10.0%
Mauritania	3.1%	2.7%
Morocco	49.0%	14.2%
Oman	68.8%	16.9%
Portugal	50.7%	38.8%
Saudi Arabia	49.0%	20.9%
Spain	65.6%	33.5%
Sudan	9.3%	n/a
Syria	22.5%	n/a
Tunisia	36.3%	28.9%
United Arab Emirates	70.9%	38.6%
United Kingdom	84.1%	48.6%
United States	78.1%	46.4%
Western Sahara	n/a	n/a
Yemen	14.9%	2.6%

Table 1: Internet penetration rate and Facebook usage rate (relative to the entire population) in selected countries that witnessed revolutions or rebellions in 2011 (data source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com>, accessed on October 30, 2012; n/a=not available)

Castells claims that the analysed rebellions were “usually leaderless movements” (224): “Because they are a network of networks, they can afford not to have an identifiable centre, and yet ensure coordination functions, as well as deliberation, by interaction between multiple nodes” (Castells 2012, 221). He uses the notion of the rhizome to point out that these movements “are roots of the new life spreading everywhere, with no central plan, but moving and networking, keeping the energy flowing, waiting for spring” (Castells 2012, 144).

In his excellent book *Tweets and the Streets. Social Media and Contemporary Activism*, Paolo Gerbaudo (2012) challenges on theoretical and empirical grounds the assumption of Castells' and others that the Internet brings about leaderless movements. He interviewed 80 activists in the USA, Egypt, Spain, the United Kingdom, Tunisia and Greece about their use of social media in protests and found that although contemporary social movements claim that they are leaderless networks, there are soft leaders that make use of social media for choreographing protests and "constructing a *choreography of assembly*" (Gerbaudo 2012, 139): "a handful of people control most of the communication flow" (Gerbaudo 2012, 135). The choreography of assembly means "the use of social media in directing people towards specific protest events, in providing participants with suggestions and instructions about how to act, and in the construction of an emotional narration to sustain their coming together in public space" (Gerbaudo 2012, 12). The movements' spontaneity would be organised "precisely because it is a highly mediated one" (Gerbaudo 2012, 164). The ethical problem would not be this movement choreography, but the denial that there are leaders because this would result in unaccountability.

Reading autobiographical accounts of the recent revolutions and protests, such as Wael Ghonim's (2012) memoirs of the Egyptian revolution and David Graeber's (2012) reflections on the emergence of the Occupy Wall Street movement, seems to confirm Paolo's findings that there were groups of activists that organized the spontaneity of the movements. Gerbaudo's work challenges Castells' (2012) speculative assumption that contemporary movements are leaderless and that the Internet brings about leaderless movements.

Manuel Castells' relationship to social theory is contested. Castells' approach has dealt with life and communication in what he calls the network society. Castells says that his trilogy *The Information Age* (Castells 2010, 2004, 2000) "does not present a formal, systematic theory of society, it proposes new concepts and a new theoretical perspective to understand the trends that characterize the structure and dynamics of our societies in the world of the twenty-first century" (Castells 2010, xix). On September 7th, 2008, I listened to Manuel Castells' talk "Sociology and Society in the 21st Century" at the International Sociological Association's First World Forum in Barcelona. He argued for a "hardening" of sociology by using more mathematics and rigorous empirical research so that sociologists would have at least to do some work (see my comments on this talk in a blog post: <http://fuchs.uti.at/197/>). Castells' assumption implies that social theory construction is no work. The task of Castells' book *Communication Power* was to "advance the construction of a grounded theory of power in the network society" (Castells 2009, 5). As Castells does not want to place himself in theoretical debates, he based his approach on "a selective reading of power theories" (Castells 2009, 6). He argues that he does not want to write books about books (Castells 2009, 6; Castells 2010, 25) and thinks that social theory books are "books about books" that contribute to "the deforestation of the planet" (Castells 2009, 6), which is just another expression for saying that they are unimportant and not worth the paper they are printed on. In a discussion of *Communication Power* (Fuchs 2009), I have indicated that Castells' lack of engagement with social philosophy and social theory results in the circumstance that he gives unjustified, arbitrary definitions of concepts such as power, network, social movements, etc.

At the 2008 ISA World Forum, Castells participated together with Craig Calhoun and Alain Touraine in a panel that discussed the latter's book "Penser autrement". One criticism by Castells was that Touraine would spend too much time in his book for deconstructing dying trees like functionalism, Marxism or postmodernism that less and less people would be interested in today. Students would for example no longer read Parsons (see my notes on this event: <http://fuchs.uti.at/195/>). The problem is not that students are not interested in social theory or that they are too stupid to understand it or become interested, but that some teachers are either not interested in theory themselves, lack the capacity to teach theory in an interesting way or have for political reasons abandoned being critical (and therefore to have an interest in critical social theory). It definitely is important

that social science students read, engage with, use and further develop the ideas of Aristotle, Plato, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Adorno, Habermas, Luhmann, Arendt, Giddens and hundreds of other theorists. Social science research and education that lack engagement with theory are signs of intellectual impoverishment. The entire history of philosophy and social theory helps us making sense of the world we live in today and to understand its genesis. Social theory of course has its own history that does not stop and needs to be continuously updated. But doing so requires an in-depth engagement with earlier approaches.

What is a social theory? Social theory is the systematic development and connection of “concepts with which to grasp social life, with identifying patterns in social relations and social action, with producing explanations for both specific features of life in society and changes in overall forms of society” (Calhoun et al. 2007, 3). It is an endeavour to understand events, institutions and trends in society, the connections between events, institutions and trends and the connection of personal life to society (Calhoun et al. 2007, 4). It is also concerned with “the nature of human action”, interaction and institutions (Giddens 1984, xvii), the human being, human doing and the reproduction and transformation of society (xx). Philosophical debates and philosophical reasoning are important tools for social theory (Giddens 1984, xvii). Sociology and social theory have their roots in philosophy (Adorno 2000, 176; Adorno 2002, 8, 54). Tasks of (critical) social theory include to point out and make people aware of unrealized potentials of society, to point out possibilities of action in contemporary society, to ask new and different questions about the present order of society (Calhoun 1995, 7f), to strengthen the imagination of people about how a better society could look like, to point out and make people aware of contemporary problems of society that limit the realization of society’s possibilities, to provide narratives about which society we live in and the main characteristics of this society so that discussions about the character and problems of contemporary society are enabled, and to analyze the relation between appearance (that which is/exists) and essence (that which should exist) (Adorno 2002, 25).

Given the role of social philosophy in social theory and its role of providing guidance about questions relating to which society we live in, it is important that each theory gives reasons for why a certain concept is employed in a certain way and not in another way. This requires engagement with other theories and arguments relating to these theories. Castells only provides his own definitions without giving reasons for why these definitions are superior to other ones. Castells cannot explain why he uses certain definitions of power, globalization, social movements, etc and not others and why he thinks we live in a network society and not in a post-industrial society, capitalist society, new capitalist empire/imperialism, finance capitalism, knowledge society, etc. It is simplistic to give single definitions and not to engage with the history of concepts. An approach is only adequately grounded if it can logically justify why it uses concepts in a certain way and not in another. Understanding contemporary society requires engaging with social philosophy and the history of conceptualising society in order to be meaningful. Castells’ aversion to social theory discourses makes him fall short of providing a grounded and justified approach. His approach is neither a social theory nor adequately theoretically grounded, but rather an arbitrary and unsystematic form of conceptualisation and collection of observations.

Social theory and critical theory are not only the weak spots of Castells’ approach, they are his blind spots, which also becomes clear in *Networks of Outrage and Hope*. Castells’ (2012) continues to practice his conviction that engagement with the diverse meanings and history of meanings of theoretical concepts does not matter. He for example describes the 15-M movement as a rhizomatic revolution (Castells 2012, 140-145), defines this concept in a footnote with the help of Wikipedia and never mentions the names Deleuze and Guattari (2004, 3-28), who coined the notion in the introduction to their book *A Thousand Plateaus*. He also does not engage with theoretical works that have dealt with the non-trivial question if, if not or under which conditions the Internet and cyberprotest are rhizomatic (see e.g. Fuchs 2008, chapter 8; Galloway 2004; Hamman 1996; Hess

2008). As a consequence, it remains completely unclear why Castells thinks the 15-M movement was a “rhizomatic revolution”. Answering this question is non-trivial because it requires engagement with the principles that Deleuze and Guattari see as constitutive for rhizomatic structures: 1) the principle of connection and heterogeneity, 2) the principle of multiplicity, 3) the principle of asignifying rupture and 4) the principle of cartography and decalcomania.

Theory is not, as claimed by Castells (2009, 6), a mere “toolbox”. Theoretical books are worth the paper they are printed on and the space they are stored on because social theory is needed for clarifying the complex meanings of concepts that are needed for understanding and changing society. Critical theory is needed for pointing out unrealised potentials of society. We do not only need suggestions of some hypotheses, but rather critical theories of media and society that are grounded in general and specific theoretical models.

4. Social Theory Recovered: A Model of the Relationship between Social Movements and the Media

Especially the dialectical philosophies of Herbert Marcuse and Ernst Bloch allow conceiving the relationship of human subjects (agents) and societal objects (structures) as dialectical so that existing structures enable and constrain human action and open up a field of possible developments for society and social systems, based on which humans reproduce existing structures or create new structures (Fuchs 2011, chapter 2). The possibilities and the likelihood of fundamental social change are therefore based on existing power structures. The subject-object-dialectic of Marcuse and Bloch is a viable alternative to structuralist-functionalist forms of dialectic that underestimate the importance of humans in the dialectic of society and reduce societal development to automatic processes without human subjects. Dialectical philosophy allows conceptualising the relationship of media and society, the relationship of different type and organisation of media to each other and the relationship of movements and the media as contradictory and grounded in the contradictions of contemporary antagonistic societies (Fuchs 2011).

A theoretical model that I suggest as an alternative to societal holism that ignores media and technology, technological reductionism that ignores society and dualism that ignores causality is to think of the relationship between rebellions and (social) media as dialectical: in the form of contradictions. Figure 1 shows a dialectical model of revolts and the media.

Protests have an objective foundation that is grounded in the contradictions of society, i.e. forms of domination that cause problems that are economic, political and cultural in nature. Societal problems can result in (economic, political, cultural/ideological) crises⁵ if they are temporally persistent and cannot be easily overcome. Crises do not automatically result in protests, but are an objective and necessary, although not sufficient condition of protest. If crisis dimensions converge and interact, then we can speak of a societal crisis. Protests require a mass of people’s perception that there are societal problems, that these problems are unbearable and a scandal and that something needs to be changed. Often actual protests and movements are triggered and continuously intensified by certain events (such as the arrest of Rosa Parks in the US civil rights movement, the public suicide of Mohamed Bouazizi in the 2011 Tunisian revolution, the police’s killing of Khaled Mohamed Said in Egypt, the pepper-spraying of activists by NYPD officer Anthony Bo-

⁵ There are of course also ecological crises that can threaten the existence of humankind. For social theory, the question is how nature relates to society. Humans have to enter into a metabolism with nature in order to survive. They have to appropriate parts of nature and change it with their activities in order to produce use-values that serve the needs of society. This means that the process, where the interaction of nature and society is directly established, takes place in the economy. We therefore do not discern ecological crises separately, but see them as one specific subtype of economic crises.

logna and the mass arrest of Occupy activists on Brooklyn Bridge in the Occupy Wall Street movement, etc).

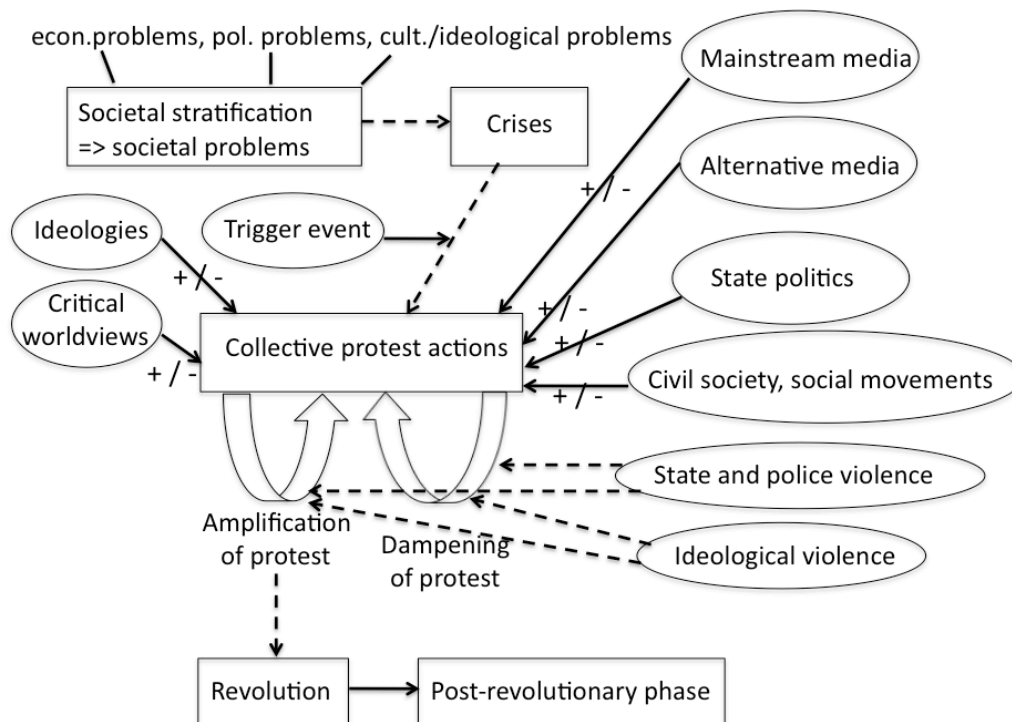


Figure 1: A model of protests and revolutions and the role of crises, the media, ideology and politics

It is precisely here that Castells' (2012) focus on the emotions of outrage and hope plays a role – in the potential transition from crises to protests. Subjective perceptions and emotions are however not the only factor because they are conditioned and influenced by politics, the media and culture/ideology. The way state politics, mainstream media and ideology on the one hand and oppositional politics/social movements, alternative media and alternative worldviews on the other hand connect to human subjects influences the conditions of protests. Each of these factors can have either amplifying or dampening effects on protests. So for example racist media coverage can advance racist stereotypes and/or the insight that the media and contemporary society are racist in-themselves. It can also advance both view, namely in respect to different individuals or groups that then enter into an antagonism with each other.

The media – social media, the Internet and all other media – are contradictory because we live in a contradictory society. As a consequence, their effects are actually contradictory, they can dampen/forestall or amplify/advance protest or have not much effect at all. Also different media (e.g. alternative media and commercial media) stand in a contradictory relation and power struggle with each other. The media are not the only factors that influence the conditions of protest – they stand in contradictory relations with politics and ideology/culture that also influence the conditions of protest. So whether protest emerges or not is shaped by multiple factors that are so complex that it cannot be calculated or forecast if protest will emerge as result of a certain crisis or not. Once protests have emerged, media, politics and culture continue to have permanent contradictory influences on

them and it is undetermined if these factors have rather neutral, amplifying or dampening effects on protest. Protests in antagonistic societies often call forth policing and police action. In this case, the state reacts to social movements with its organised form of violence. State violence against protests and ideological violence against movements (in the form of attacks of delegitimization conducted by the media, politicians and others) can again have amplifying, dampening or insignificant effects on protests.

If there is a protest amplification spiral, protest may grow to larger and larger dimensions, which can eventually, but not necessarily, result in a revolution – a breakdown and fundamental reconstitution/renewal of the economy, politics and worldviews caused by a social movement's overthrow of society that puts the revolutionary forces into power and control of the major economic, political and moral structures (see Goodwin 2001, 9). Every revolution results in post-revolutionary phase, in which the reconstruction and renewal of society begins and the legacy of conflict and the old society can pose challenges and new contradictions.

Social media in a contradictory society (made up of class conflicts and other conflicts between dominant and dominated groups) are likely to have a contradictory character: they do not necessarily and automatically support/amplify or dampen/limit rebellions, but rather pose contradictory potentials that stand in contradictions with influences by the state, ideology and capitalism.

5. Castells on Social Media in the Context of Protests and Revolutions: The Dimension of Empirical Research

One problem of Castells' book is that his assumptions are highly speculative. He points out that his task is only "to suggest some hypotheses" (Castells 2012, 4). If strong claims are made about social media having a determining role in revolutions and rebellions, then definitely some evidence is needed for sustaining or falsifying such assumptions. Castells does not offer such evidence.

The only way for determining the real role of the Internet and social media in a revolution, is to conduct based on theoretical models empirical research that asks the activists themselves how they used communication tools. Conducting such research is not always easy. Egyptian, Tunisian and other universities do not have the same amount of research funding as their counterparts in the West and Western researchers conducting research about Egypt might be more biased and are often facing cultural barriers. In order to illustrate the structural racist inequality that is built into the system of research and academic publishing, I conducted a title, keyword and abstract search for the term "Arab spring" in the database Communication and Mass Media Complete (December 8th, 2012). The results were 29 articles with a total of 30 authors. Of these 30 authors, 10 were based in the USA, 7 in the UK, 2 each in Israel and India, and 1 each in Australia, Italy, Lebanon, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates and Sweden. The share of authors living in Arab countries was just 10%, the share of authors living in Western countries in contrast was 86.7%. This result illustrates that Arab scholars and scholars in non-Western countries in general are facing inequalities when publishing in the world's major communication journals, even if it concerns topics that cover politics in their own countries.

Therefore the only way forward is to help Arab media researchers and scholars from developing countries in general conducting research about the Arab spring and other topics by offering independent research grants and helping them to publish the results in international journals and books. That this does largely not happen is due to the marginalisation and structural discrimination of the Arab world and in fact the marginalisation of non-Western research in general in the academic landscape. Curran and Park (2000, 3; see also Chakravartty and Zhao 2008) have in this context argued that Western media research is largely shaped by "self-absorption and parochialism". Daya Thussu (2009b, 24) has called for the "decolonization of thoughts and theory" because Media and Com-

munication Studies is a “largely nationally bound and inward-looking area of academic inquiry” (Thussu 2009a, 1). Imperialism and structural racism are built into science, research and technology development in global capitalist society. Furthermore, revolutions and therefore also media use in revolutions are difficult to analyse because revolutionary situations and post-revolutionary conditions do not provide easy access to the research field.

There are serious difficulties of studying social movements and revolutions, especially concerning non-Western countries that are structurally discriminated in academia. There is, however, some data available that allows us to test Castells’ hypothesis that contemporary social movements emerged from and are largely based on the Internet and live and act through digital media.

eMarketing Egypt conducted a survey about the Internet and the revolution in Egypt (for more details see: <http://www.emarketing-egypt.com/1st-study-about-the-Internet-and-the-Egyptian-Revolution:-Survey-Results/2/0/18>). 71% of the respondents said that Facebook was the prime medium “used to tie up with events and news”. The problem is however that the survey only focused on Egyptian Internet users, who make up a minority of the population (26.4%, see table 1), and not on the Egyptian population as a whole. The results are therefore necessarily techno-centric.

The Tahrir Data Project (<http://tahrirdata.info>) conducted a survey with Tahrir Square activists (N=1056). Wilson and Dunn (2011) present some first results from the survey that focused on activists’ media use. Interestingly, Castells ignores Wilson and Dunn’s results, although they were published in the International Journal of Communication that he co-edits. The survey shows that face-to-face interaction (93%) was the most important form of activists’ protest communication, followed by television (92%), phones (82%), print media (57%), SMS (46%), Facebook (42%), e-mail (27%), radio (22%), Twitter (13%) and blogs (12%). Interpersonal communication, traditional media and telecommunications were more important information sources and communication tools in the revolution than social media and the Internet.

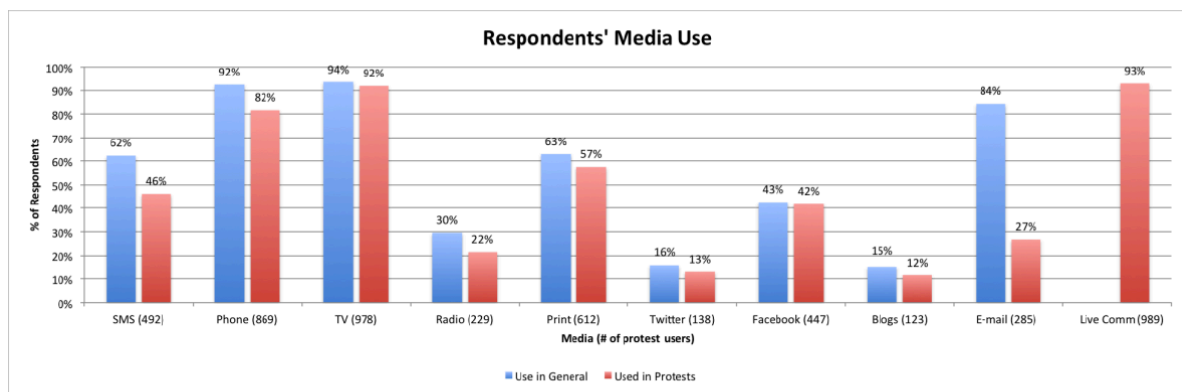


Figure 1. Respondents’ Media Use.

Figure 2: Media use of Egyptian revolutionaries (source: Wilson and Dunn 2011, 1252; <http://ijoc.org/ojs/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1180>)

Another part of the survey showed that Egyptian revolutionaries perceived phone communication followed by face-to-face talk as most important for their own protest, most informative and most motivating for participating in the protests (figure 3). Facebook, eMail and Twitter were considered to be less important, informative, used and motivating.

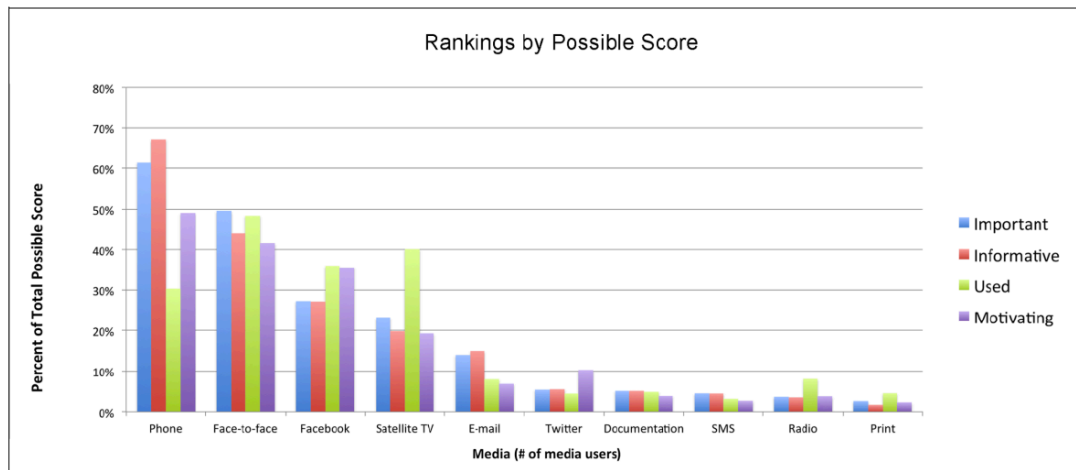


Figure 6. Rankings by Possible Score

Figure 3: Egyptian revolutionaries' perceived importance, informativeness, protest usage and protest motivation of various media (source: Wilson and Dunn 2011, 1252; <http://ijoc.org/ojs/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1180>)

The study illustrates that “digital media was not as central to protester communication and organization on the ground as the heralds of Twitter revolutions would have us hyperbolize” (Wilson and Dunn 2011, 1252).

Media dimension of the survey question “These are some sources that you might or might not use for news and information about the Occupy movement. Please indicate whether you used these sources for news and information about the Occupy movement”	Share of respondents who used the specific medium at least once or more often in the past week for informing themselves about the Occupy movement	N
Email	79.1%	1132
Occupy websites	83.4%	1127
Facebook	89.7%	1126
Word of mouth	85.2%	1125
Discussions face-to-face or at Occupy camps	51.9%	1117
YouTube	72.2%	1113
Livestreams	61.4%	1109
Local newspapers	52.4%	1099
National or international newspapers	58.5%	1099
Local radio	52.4%	1099
Blogs	62.8%	1090
Twitter	41.9%	1078
Local television	33.1%	1073
National or international television	45.1%	1064
Chat rooms/IRC	21.2%	1057
Tumblr	20.5%	1052

Table 2: Share of respondents in the Occupy Wall Street movement who answered that they used a specific medium for informing themselves about the movement at least once a week or more frequently (data source: Occupy General Survey, <http://www.occupyresearch.net/orgs>, accessed on December 7th 2012)

Table 2 shows results from the Occupy General Survey that was conducted among Occupy Wall Street activists (see <http://www.occupyresearch.net/2012/10/18/orgs-data-facet-browser/>): Face-to-face communication and the Internet were activists' most important means for obtaining information about the movement. Especially Facebook, word of mouth, websites and e-mail played an important role. These results show that both direct face-to-face interaction and mediated interaction have been crucial news sources for Occupy activists. Broadcasting and newspapers had a much less important role than the Internet. Facebook was a very popular source of information, however older online media (email, websites) played a much more important role than YouTube, blogs, Twitter and Tumblr, which shows that one should not overestimate the role of what some have called "web 2.0" in protests. This data is certainly limited because it does not take into account the use of non-commercial platforms (such as or N-1, Occupii) and non-commercial social movement media (such as the Occupied Wall Street Journal, the Occupied Times, Occupy News Network, etc). There may also be a difference between activists' media use as information source and as mobilization tool and coordination tool during demonstrations, which is not reflected in the survey. This shows that further empirical research on the media use of Occupy is needed. The results allow us however to conclude that the Occupy movement makes use of multiple communication channels and that the alleged newness of "social media" should not blind us for the importance of interpersonal face-to-face communication and older online media when analysing the information structures of social movements.

Castells' (2012) hypothesis is that contemporary social movements emerged from and are largely based on the Internet and live and act through digital media. Available data indicates that in the Egyptian revolution, interpersonal communication, broadcasting and the phone were more important communication tools than the Internet. Data from the Occupy General Survey indicates that interpersonal communication and online communication were important information and news sources for activists. These data are certainly limited and could/should be extended by studies that asked further and more detailed questions. They however are sufficient for falsifying Castells' hypothesis that contemporary social movements emerged from and are largely based on the Internet and live and act through digital media. These empirical results deconstruct the myth that the Arab spring was a social media revolution, a Twitter revolution, a Facebook revolution or a revolution 2.0. Social media and the Internet played a role as one among several media (especially interpersonal communication), but empirical evidence does not sustain Castells' implicit assumption that social media were necessary conditions of the revolution. The Arab revolutions were not tweeted, blogged or liked. Social media played a role in protest communication, but it was one role among different media types. Manuel Castells overestimates the role of social media and the Internet in protest communication. It seems like a Western liberal intellectual's fascination with the Internet has translated into an overemphasis and celebration of the revolutionary realities of Internet communication.

Castells book falls behind his self-set goal that communications research should make use of hard sciences and rigorous empirical research (see <http://fuchs.uti.at/197/>). I do not necessarily agree with the argument of the need to "harden" Media and Communication Studies because social philosophy and social theory are crucial for critically understanding and reflecting on the media world in contemporary society. But Castells' book *Networks of Outrage and Hope* fails based on the standards he himself has tried to set for Media and Communication Studies. Castells earlier methodological comments are the immanent critique of his new book that is based on speculations that seem to be guided by liberal ideology and lack both the dimensions of systematic theory and empirical research.

6. Manuel Castells and David Harvey: The Question of Political Struggle - For or against Capitalism?

Castells (2012, 194) argues with some caution that Occupy is a class struggle movement: “what is relatively new and meaningful is that there are indications that Occupy Wall Street has shaped the awareness of Americans on the reality of what I would dare to call class struggle”. But he immediately limits the implications of this thought by saying that the movement is not anti-capitalist, but wants to reform capitalism: “The criticism is focused on financial capitalism and on its influence on government, not on capitalism as such. The movement does not embrace ideologies of the past. Its quest aims at eradicating evil in the present, while reinventing community for the future. Its fundamental achievement has been to rekindle hope that another life is possible” (Castells 2012, 197).

In the annex of his book, Castells provides data from a Fox News Poll survey from October 2011, in which a relative majority of 46% of the respondents said that it does not think that the Occupy Wall Street movement is anti-capitalist (Castells 2012, 290)⁶. The question that arises is if a survey conducted by an extreme right-wing media organisation like Fox News is credible and should be used as data source in an academic work.

Based on data (that are however not shown in table form and not further discussed) from the Pew Research Center, Castells argues: “However, it is to be noticed that perceptions of capitalism and socialism have changed little since 2010. Indeed, the majority of supporters of the Occupy movement are not openly critical of capitalism: there are as many positive as negative opinions about capitalism among its ranks” (Castells 2012, 290). A closer look at the data⁷ of the survey that was conducted in December 2011 shows that Occupy Wall Street supporters have a predominantly negative perception of both the terms capitalism (47%) and socialism (52%)⁸. But there is a logical flaw in Castells’ argumentation: He concludes from these data (that are not well referenced because it is unclear in the second paragraph on page 197 which survey Castells actually talks about) that the “movement does not embrace ideologies of the past” (Castells 2012, 197). To be precise, Castells argues first that “the majority of supporters of the Occupy movement are not openly critical of capitalism” and then continues: “The criticism is focused on financial capitalism and on its influence on government, not on capitalism as such. The movement does not embrace ideologies of the past. Its quest aims at eradicating evil in the present, while reinventing community for the future” (Castells 2012, 197). The logical problem lies in the sentence starting with “The movement”: people who say in a survey that they are in favour of the Occupy movement are not necessarily activists themselves. The group of activists that participated in the survey is a subset of the group that designates itself as movement supporters. Castells draws an inference that is not logically consistent. That the relative majority of a sample that consists of a selection of respondents from the general population disagrees with both the terms capitalism and socialism does not mean that Occupy activists do not consider themselves anti-capitalist. Only surveys conducted among activists can give a clearer picture. Castells makes premature conclusions that more reflect his own political ideology than reality. The Pew survey does not allow drawing conclusions about activists’ attitudes because supporters are not necessarily activists.

Also asking a question such as “Is your view of socialism predominantly positive or negative?” is problematic because the term “socialism” is for historical reasons polarizing and biased although there are different models of socialism. The problem is that many people tend to associate socialism with Stalin and the Soviet Union, which makes it diffi-

⁶ For more details see: Fox News Poll: 76 percent dissatisfied with direction of country. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2011/10/27/fox-news-poll-76-percent-dissatisfied-with-direction-country/> (accessed on December 8th, 2012).

⁷ Pew Global Attitudes Project: Pervasive gloom about the world economy. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/07/12/pervasive-gloom-about-the-world-economy/> (accessed on December 9th, 2012)

⁸ Pew Research Center: Little change in public’s response to “capitalism”, “socialism”. <http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/28/little-change-in-publics-response-to-capitalism-socialism/> (accessed on December 9th, 2012).

cult to conduct an unbiased survey. There may be quite different results if respondents are asked if they favour a system, in which the people's common control of wealth and society, which is a crucial goal of socialism, but avoids usage of an emotionally polarizing term. Avoiding using negative and biased terms is a basic rule of empirical social research (Babbie 2010, 260-262) that unfortunately is not always taken into account. I do not claim that the Occupy movement perceives itself necessarily as anti-capitalist. Its practices have a dimension that is critical of capitalism. However, if these practices translate or do not translate into anti-capitalist consciousness is at the moment unclear, the available data does not allow drawing conclusions on this matter. One can only make give an answer to this question with the help of an unbiased survey conducted among Occupy activists.

It can also be questioned that there is, as Castells says, little change of the perception of capitalism. 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 free market economy⁹. 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 economy¹⁰. The agreement to capitalism is especially low in crisis-ridden countries such as Spain (47%), Greece (44%), Egypt (50%) and Tunisia (42%).

Although he once mentions class struggle as aspect of the Occupy movement, Castells overall rather neglects the economic dimension of contemporary movements, reduces them to political struggles for the reform of democracy and neglects the dimension of struggles against capitalism. As conclusion in his book, Castells therefore desires a "love between social activism and political reformism" (Castells 2012, 237). For Castells, the analysed movements fit well into the Western-liberal framework of democracy that only talks about democracy in politics, but never questions the actual existing lack of democratic control in the capitalist economy. He says that the analysed movements want to "transform the state" (Castells 2012, 227), are cultural movements with new values (231f) and movements for real democracy (124). By "real democracy" Castells only means political-institutional reforms and not fundamental transformations of the economy. He does not see the entanglement of politics and the economy and consequently would not agree with Marx and Engels (1848) that communism is the "struggle for democracy".

Castells (2011b) argues that the current crisis is multidimensional – it would be an environmental, urban, everyday life, communication, political and ideological crisis. Politics would be the dominant factor: "Perhaps the most fundamental crisis is the crisis of the political institutions. [...] this is largely a crisis resulting from the absence of regulation and supervision on behalf of the public interest, the ideological and political demise of the responsibility of the state in the past two decades is arguably at the root of its cause" (Castells 2011b, 194). Assuming that the crisis is predominantly political implies that more regulation will fix it. It neglects the power of the capitalist economy and that at the heart of this crisis lies a fundamental class conflict that has resulted in an explosion of income- and wealth-inequalities that have driven indebtedness and financialisation.

We can compare Castells' analysis of the crisis to the one by David Harvey (2011b). Such a comparison is interesting because Harvey and Castells are the "two leading writers in urban analysis" and have "both been strongly influenced by Marx" (Giddens 2006, 900). Both Harvey (2011b, 2012) and Castells (2011b, 2012) have published on the current crisis and contemporary movements.

Harvey identifies interlinked dimensions of the current crisis:

- Capital accumulation: the crisis of financial capitalism that stems from the financialisation of the economy;

⁹ Global survey: 74% critical of neoliberal capitalism. <http://coto2.wordpress.com/2009/12/31/74-critical-of-neoliberal-capitalism/> (accessed on December 8th, 2012).

¹⁰ Pew Global Attitudes Project: Pervasive gloom about the world economy. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/07/12/pervasive-gloom-about-the-world-economy/> (accessed on December 9th, 2012)

- The labour market: wage repression was partly achieved by offshoring production, which required deregulating and liberalising cross-border capital flows, which in turn advanced financialisation and made the global economy more prone to crises;
- Nature and the means of production: the limited supply of raw materials and environmental destruction limit capital accumulation;
- Technology and organisation: Changes in the technological composition of capital resulted in deindustrialization that in turn advanced financialisation and accumulation by dispossession as investment strategies;
- The labour process: Increased control and repression at the workplace and offshoring contained resistance and created at the same time new sources of resistance;
- Demand: The creation of an advertising and consumer culture on the supply side was not matched on the demand side because of wage repression. As a result, workers had to indebt themselves to be able to pay for housing and their living. Wage repression resulted in a lack of demand and indebtedness, which resulted in a fiscal crisis of the state, which resulted in further wage reductions, the bailout of banks with taxpayers' money and other pressures on workers.

Harvey argues that there are seven dimensions of society (technology and organisation, relations to nature, social relations, knowledge and culture, labour and production, institutions/governments/legal system, everyday life and social reproduction). Crises could start and proceed along any of these dimensions and as a combination of any combination of dimensions. The trick of revolutionary politics would be that movements do not concentrate on single elements, but act as co-revolutionary movements that “keep the political movement moving from one moment to another in mutually reinforcing ways” to “keep the dialectic between the different moments in motion” (Harvey 2011b, 111). From a social theory perspective, one can certainly ask the question, why exactly there are seven dimensions in Harvey's model of society and how exactly they are connected. But notwithstanding this criticism (that can be solved by systematically integrating various dimensions into an overall model), his view of crisis poses advantages to the one advanced by Castells because he shows how multiple dimensions of the crisis – the economy, nature, culture, the state, consumption, technology, organisation – are integrated via capitalism and advance an overall crisis of capital accumulation that feeds back onto other levels, where it creates and enforces other crises (such as the fiscal crisis of the state). The difference between Harvey and Castells is not only theoretical, it is also political: Whereas Harvey talks of the need of a left alternative and revolutionary movements, Castells' contribution in the same book asks for a “new economic culture” (Castells 2011b, 185) that is needed for the “reconstruction of a form of innovative, global capitalism” (Castells 2011b, 209).

Both David Harvey (November 12th, 2011) and Manuel Castells (November 25th, 2011) visited and gave lectures at the Occupy London camp. It is interesting to view both videos¹¹ and to compare them in respect to the analysis of the crisis and the identified political tasks.

For Castells (2011a), the crisis is a crisis of the political system: “This is not an economic crisis. This is a political crisis. And the political crisis is both in terms of the institutions that cannot manage the system anymore and is in terms of the public opinion” (Castells 2011a, 32:45-32:59). In contrast, David Harvey sees the crisis as a crisis of capitalism. There is the “free right on part of the capitalist class to exploit to the hilt everybody that they can get their hands on. [...] What is now going on is [...] that [...] accumulation of wealth is through the dispossession of others' wealth. The capitalist class: [...] what they are very good at is stealing, they are good at robbery” (Harvey 2011a, 5:10-5:52).

Both Castells (2011a) and Harvey (2011a) see the crisis as multidimensional, but the difference is that ultimately for Castells it is a political crisis and for Harvey a crisis of capitalism.

¹¹ See <http://raphaelfrancoart.wordpress.com/2011/12/05/david-harvey-and-manuel-castells-speech-at-occupy-london/> (accessed on November 9th, 2012) for the streaming of both videos on one page.

For Castells (2011a), the solution is to reinvent politics and democracy: “What’s going on is a system out of control destroying people’s life to save banks. And the only way to stop it is to reinvent politics because the current political system simply does not work, is dysfunctional” (Castells 2011a, 1:41-2:00).

David Harvey (2011a) in contrast called the Occupy movement to strive for overcoming capitalism: “All around the world there is a growing sense that this system, which is being constructed, does not and cannot work. And furthermore it must not be allowed to work any further” (Harvey 2011a, 16:00-16:20). “We have to start thinking about the move towards a zero-growth economy. [...] We have to understand very clearly that that is a non-capitalist economy. And it is a non-capitalist economy for a very simple reason, that capital is about accumulation, it is about growth” (Harvey 2011a, 17:50-18:13) At the level of strategy, the question would be how to organise an urban revolution: “In closing the city down you can actually stop capital accumulation” (Harvey 2011a, 22:20-22:25).

In terms of political goals and strategies that Castells and Harvey recommend to the Occupy movement, Castells calls for a reform of the political system, whereas Harvey thinks this is not enough and argues that the crisis shows that capitalism must be overcome.

Castells (2011b, 199) on the one hand says that there are “limits of capitalist perestroika”, on the other hand he thinks that what is required is merely the addition of a new layer to the economy, a “use-value economy” (Castells 2011b, 205). Examples for the use-value economy are consumer cooperatives, producer cooperatives, urban farming, barter networks and time banks, communal living, alternative modes of transport, community banking, volunteer-based social services, counselling networks, voluntary associations, peer-to-peer file sharing and open source innovations (Castells 2011b, 207f). Conill, Castells, Cardenas and Servon (2012) analyse the emergence of alternative economic structures in Catalonia during the course of the crisis.

Castells does however not argue for the creation of a use-value economy that transcends capitalism, but rather says that this economy adds a new dimension to capitalism: “Of course, the entire economy cannot be based solely on these practices. This is why there is still a need for the reconstruction of a form of innovative, global capitalism, based more on the culture of innovation than on the technology of financial/real-estate speculation” (Castells 2011b, 209). Castells does not see the imperialistic character of capitalism: capitalism has never peacefully coexisted with non-capitalist milieus, but rather needs to constantly expand and find new sources and spheres of exploitation and commodification. There are no permanent islands and safe havens in capitalism. Capitalism tries to transform everything and everyone into instruments for the generation of monetary profit because its logic is the one of capital accumulation. Castells therefore does not imagine a different economic system, but merely “a different economic culture” (Castells 2011b, 209). Consequently, Castells, Caraça and Cardoso (2012, 308) stress that “new cultures based on translating the meaning of life into economic meaning are still in the process of being created” and do not think about the need of an entirely new mode of production that substitutes capitalism and its contradictions.

7. Conclusion

Manuel Castells’ book *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age* is one of the first books that analyses the role of the Internet in the 2011 social movements, such as the Arab spring, the 15-M movement or Occupy Wall Street. Castells has written and published this work at an impressive speed, which makes it definitely a timely book that has, as I have argued in this article, severe limits and problems:

- It overestimates the role of the Internet in society and neglects or downplays the importance of other dimensions of society.
- It in the last instance shares the techno-euphoria and techno-determinism of thinkers like Clay Shirky and Andrew Sullivan by advancing the assumption that contemporary

social movements emerged from and are largely based on the Internet and live and act through digital media.

- It lacks engagement with social theory and philosophy and attention to the history of theoretical concepts.
- It is a form of conceptualisation that lacks a systematic theory and models of society that explain the latter's structures, subjects and dynamics.
- It falls short of the goal that Castells voiced in 2008 – the “hardening” of the social sciences: the formulated hypotheses are highly speculative and not substantiated by sufficient empirical data. Castells' book is the immanent critique of his earlier set positivistic goals and these voiced goals in turn are the immanent critique of *Networks of Outrage and Hope*.
- On the normative and political level that deals with the question of desirable alternatives, Castells (in contrast to e.g. David Harvey) limits his thinking to the universe of capitalism. He argues for a new economic culture that innovates global capitalism and tries to portray thinking beyond capitalism as no option by claiming without further evidence that the Occupy movement is not anti-capitalist.

I am sure Castells' book will due to his accumulated reputation sell well. But it is nonetheless in the last instance a book that advances the “deforestation of the planet”. The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it. Changing the world requires among many things an understanding of society. Social science books try to offer understandings of society. Critical social science books try to offer understandings that can help citizens to make sense of the times they live in and inspire them in the struggles they fight. Some books require more interpretation of the world than they actually offer in order to provide a critical understanding of how the world changes. *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age* is one of these books.

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