

**Castells, M., 2013, *Sieci oburzenia i nadziei. Ruchy społeczne w erze Internetu*, (English title: *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age*), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, pp. 300.**

*Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* was written by Manuel Castells in 2012 and published in Poland in 2013. This book is based mostly on a series of lectures, delivered by this globally renowned thinker at Cambridge University, as well as interactions with academics, which were described by him as a “fantastic group of intelligent students, as well as socially engaged citizens.” The monograph can be considered as a swift reaction to the affairs that have dominated media and scientific discourse since 2011. It concerns major social and political changes in the world, emerging from events which took place in, among other areas, the Middle East. Therefore, Manuel Castells’s starting point for his deliberation was the so-called Arab Spring, the results of which are rather ambiguous. Some of the revolutions in this region, for example in Tunisia or Egypt, led to political, economic or social reforms. Others, however, in Libya and Syria, caused civil wars. In many Arab states, popular outrage permanently destabilized internal situation.

The socio-political events of the Arab Spring brought a huge amount of empirical data for research activities. It was a great opportunity for Manuel Castells, especially when it is considered that recently he also prepared another monograph: *Communication Power*. In this book, he emphasized the importance of communication in the context of power within a network society. This work, however, introduced a theoretical approach, in contrast to *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, which focuses mostly on practical aspects. The author begins his narration with an explanation for the reasons of the Arab revolutions. He compared the events in Tunisia (the so-called ‘Jasmine Revolution’) and Iceland (the ‘Kitchenware’ or ‘Kitchen Implement Revolution’). These two seemingly very different cases, due to social, cultural, religious, political and geographical conditions, were almost identical when it comes to the character of the political reforms. Using the methods of network communication, the protesters successfully attempted to overthrow governments and create a new administration, based on democratic procedures. In both cases, the

transformation of the political system was based on the formulation of a new constitution. What was interesting for Manuel Castells, in order to prepare them, new technologies were introduced. Social masses gained the possibility to debate the projects through the use of the Internet. Therefore, both constitutions, as the first in the world, were created using 'crowdsourcing' as the entirety of each population participated in the development of new constitutional arrangements. It may be perceived as the final form of Jürgen Habermas's deliberation. This proves that in a network society, this kind of process is possible. Therefore, at the end of the chapter one, Manuel Castells concluded that the network is an intercultural instrument of social change.

In chapter two, the author focuses mostly on the Egyptian revolution, the course of which was much more dramatic. So far several thousand citizens have been killed. It is important to note that the transformation in this country is still ongoing, due to the profound political clash between Muslim fundamentalists and the army. A major problem, which generates the biggest tensions, is of course the role of Islam. The result of this conflict will decide the future shape of the political system in Egypt. In this context, according to Manuel Castells, the regime of Hosni Mubarak was overthrown relatively quickly, in a manner similar to the events in Tunisia. Political corruption, as well as the domination of his family in the economic sector, were major sources of social irritation. As Castells notes, the most important element was the fact that Egyptian society was relatively young and well-educated, which was not consistent with their average standard of living. Among educated young people, unemployment was 10 times higher than among uneducated people (p. 76). In this situation, this 'precariat' became a 'leaven' of protests. Thanks to their acquaintance with new technologies, such as Internet communication, they started to organize themselves into virtual resistance groups against the Mubarak regime. When the level of irritation peaked, they gathered in Tahrir Square to mark their presence on the streets. In this way, they proved the profound connection between Internet social media, the social networks of people in the offline world and the mainstream media, which became visible through the interactions between cyberspace and the urban reality (p. 70). In this context, the major achievement of the Tahrir Square activists was

the creation of a new communication instrument, which resulted in a massive virtual protest despite the countermeasures taken by the government. Those that were most notable were blogs, where youths submitted multiple articles and statements encouraging them to join demonstrations, as well as videos and pictures documenting the brutality of the security forces. For example, the Manaal blog published advice on how to connect to the Internet using a cellular phone, Bluetooth technology and a laptop bypassing regime censorship. Protesters also utilized the TOR coded network, HotSpotShield, proxy servers and Speak2Tweet technology. They even created a unique manual, which contained suggestions regarding how to communicate with others while avoiding Internet control.

In chapter three, Castells noted that revolutions in many Arab states are still ongoing. In many cases, they have been transformed into regular military conflicts, as the events in Syria have proved. He comments on these problems, basing his thoughts on the publication of Philip Howard's *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy. Information Technology and Political Islam*. After a comparative analysis of 75 Muslim states, this researcher stated that access and the use of information technologies promotes democratization, strengthens democracy and increases the engagement and autonomy of civil society. In another publication, Muzzamil Hussain and Philip Howard stated that the intensity and power of these social movements were strongly influenced by the use of digital networks by young protesters (p. 109).

Chapter four of the monograph focuses mainly on a new term coined by Castells. Basing this notion on the example of the Spanish movement *indignadas* (also called M15), the author formulates a thesis that the political movement initiated by Stephen Hessel has a 'rizomatic' character: "Sources of new life entwining the whole world, without any central plan, but in a constant movement, create networks, maintain the flow of energy, wait for the spring." The term of 'rizomatic revolution' is based on the experience of the M15 movement, which in response to the grave economic and political crisis in Spain made an attempt to counteract the existing situation. It refers to the Spanish word *rizoma* which is basically a rhizome. It is a symbol of the expanding resistance against governments within the virtual world. Manuel Castells, being a professor of the Universitat

Oberta de Catalunya, presents a detailed analysis of this movement, including its origin, the reasons for its creation, discourse, structures and effects. In this context, it is important to emphasize that *indignadas* contributed to the new experience of democracy. Their experiments, which are concerned with, for example, the organization of political assemblies, were acquired by their successors in the United States.

In chapter five the author concentrates his discourse mainly on the movement that was created in the United States as a result of the 2008 crisis, and the diffusion of Spanish and Arab resentment in the international environment. Manuel Castells states that in recent years the social and economic situation in the USA deteriorated due to the speculation and greed of financial sector managers, which were supported by the government (p. 155). As a result, the crisis affected mostly the poorest citizens. Protests were initiated from Canada, where the magazine *Adbusters* on 13 July 2011 published an online manifesto with the hashtag: #occupywallstreet. It clearly indicated that the financial sector was responsible for the crisis. Therefore, on 17 September 2011 some of the biggest American cities were paralyzed by protests. The core of this movement was based in New York, where street demonstrations appeared to be the most numerous. The majority of protesters organized themselves around Zuccotti park. At the same time the Internet was filled with multiple initiatives with the symbol of OWS. Many digital communication channels were created in order to avoid censorship and mainstream media. Unfortunately, despite their great determination and the drawing from Spanish experience, this movement has to date achieved no success, as it was subjected to considerable pressure from the government and municipality.

The last two chapters of this monograph can be considered as a summary. In this part, Castells states that all these social movements have created a new kind of hybrid, autonomous space, which is the combination of territorial localization and cyberspace. None of them could work without the other. Such a statement can be easily confirmed not only by practical examples but also other scientific analysis, prepared among others by Polish researchers.

Unfortunately this book also has one major flaw. Its research scope is too limited. Manuel Castells focused only on four examples of social outrage, despite the fact that there are many more. Some of them,

such as in Iran and Russia are very interesting and would greatly contribute to the academic value of this work. Despite this fact, it is a significant monograph, which explains how social movements can practically utilize new technologies at the beginning of the 21st century. It brings interesting and innovatory points and perspectives to the international scientific debate concerning the interactions at the crossroads of contemporary political systems, economy, social movements and new channels of communication, based on the Internet. Therefore, it can be recommended not only to media, social and political researchers, but also to students, politicians and journalists.

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