A REVIEW OF:

MANUEL CASTELLS (2012) *NETWORKS OF OUTRAGE AND HOPE: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE INTERNET AGE*, CAMBRIDGE, UK: POLITY PRESS, PP. IX+306, ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-6285-5.

JEFFREY BUTCHER

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

If the purpose of Manuel Castells' book *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* is, as he says, "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" (p. 4), then he accomplishes his goal but sells himself short. His thorough scrutiny of a mutually determining relationship between the rise of social networks and the wresting of social power by the people provides a much needed timely empirical delineation of political upheaval provoked by social networking. The book lends itself to inquiries seminal to the advancement of understanding factors that contribute to the instigation of social movements. The broad scope of global phenomena outlined in the book does not permit a thorough comprehension of locally isolated revolutions, but effectively suggests that social and political disturbances fashioned by the internet are internationally linked by the rise of "mass self-communication" (p. 6). Ultimately, Castells surely arouses hypotheses that need debated, but the lack of a targeted audience accompanied by the absence of an identifiable theoretical lens results in confusion in regards to whom should be debating the issues brought about.

Pointing to political insurrections in Tunisia and Iceland as the catalysts for international movements spreading to the Arab world and onward to the West, Castells delivers an account of international uprisings while organizing it into chapters based on geographical location. He does well to exhibit strong knowledge on the impact that social networking had on these global events. The chapter that most strongly supports the significance, and even necessity, of social networking to fuel current and future revolts occurs in the section on the Egyptian Revolution. While explaining that "the actual spark that ignited the Egyptian revolution, prompting protests on an unprecedented scale, was inspired by the Tunisian revolution" (p. 54), Castells recognizes that the assemblage of the masses through internet communication became so effectively threatening that the Egyptian government took measures to censor and block social media websites. This is certainly the most compelling evidence that the internet not only has the power to bring activists together, but that it can in fact organize legitimate social change as well. Moving forward to the Arab Spring and the Indignadas in Spain, Castells continues to prove

his point that the internet opens up autonomous space for mass self-communication to develop into the occupation of urban spaces by the masses.

The materialization of, and subsequently the chapter on, Occupy Wall Street seems to cause the most trouble for the book's premise. This is not because the people did not utilize social networking to rally willing participants to occupy the streets of New York; it is due to the deficiency of real cohesion resulting from Occupy Wall Street which may suggest that the social networking was unsuccessful. Whereas other movements exhibited more focused demands, Occupy Wall Street, as Castells notes, resulted in more "grievances than demands" (p. 186). To this end, more research must be done before we can make conclusions about the spontaneous nature of what Castells calls "network societies" and the relevance to the origination of Occupy Wall Street. The capability of the internet to create a democratic form of communication is clearly illustrated, but Castells leaves the organic spontaneity of Occupy Wall Street in question. Additionally, he does not take into account the authority of non-internet-based media in America, nor does he stress the level of oppression that truly sparks operative revolutionary efforts.

Despite the genuinely enthralling information in *Networks of Outrage in Hope*, readers are left to deliberate on the bearing the book will have. From the introduction, Castells' target audience is left in question. The simplified purpose that he presents appears to be an attempt to attract a broad readership. The general description of the rise, growth, and effects of social networking are highly accessible. However, the construction of power relationships described suggests the book is for a more scholarly audience, though the choice to not emphasize an in-depth theoretical framework diminishes the book's scholarly value. Castells puts little effort into implementing a model grounded on what he refers to as a "power and counterpower" relationship, a theory he uses in his earlier works. Although the book is more of a case study than of an intervention into a polemical discourse, it would serve Castells well to expound on the relationship between power constructs and the spontaneous formation of an organic class consciousness. Additionally, the "power and counterpower" theory briefly presented is remarkably similar to Antonio Gramsci's philosophy of hegemony and counter-hegemony. Linking his work to Gramsci would provide Castells with a reference point of his own as well as allow for a very compelling analysis pertaining to what is at stake in terms of social networking and hegemonic forces working in today's societies. Grounding his case study on the Gramscian tradition would also afford a better explication of spontaneous, organic movements.

Ultimately, the timing of these events and the release of *Networks of Outrage and Hope* prove to be Castells' best and worst assets. As Castells says, "The networked social movements... will continue to fight and debate, evolve and eventually fade away in their current states of being," but that it is also "too early to evaluate the ultimate outcome of these movements" (p. 244). The issues raised in the book, supported by carefully drawn out empirical data, certainly need to be recognized and further examined; and Castells has opened space for theoretical interventions that seek to understand the current sociological and political implications of social networking and revolution. Let us hope that this happens before the time comes to evaluate outdated outcomes of these movements.