Book Review: Occupying New Levels: A Comparative Review of Occupy Nation and Networks of Outrage and Hope

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The word "global" has increasingly become a trendy term used by members of the public and academia alike. Generally this word has been used to indicate the continuing significance of global finance and trade. However, this term does not have to merely relate to capitalism's ascendancy. As capitalism extends its grasp around the globe, social movements have also united worldwide to fight for what the system has failed to offer – peace and democracy. In this sense we could use the term "global," not merely to draw upon the exploitation and corruption occurring on a global scale induced by capitalist expansion, but to indicate the immense communication, solidarity, and peaceful protest that have emerged against it worldwide. In order to understand the significance and scale of these new movements, it is important to extend social movement analysis in a way that adequately depicts these movements' modes of organization on this global level – new forms of conflict produce new forms of resistance. This book review compares Todd Gitlin's (2012) *Occupy Nation* and Manuel Castells' (2012) *Networks of Outrage and Hope* to draw on particular techniques Gitlin and Castells use to analyze the Occupy Wall Street movement (OWS) and how these techniques can be employed to shape future work on contemporary social movements.

Gitlin's (2012) *Occupy Nation* examines OWS in three sections. The first section reviews the origin and mobilization of the movement against Wall Street – he describes Wall Street and Washington as "the systole and diastole of America's (and therefore much of the world's) political economy" (p. 10). The second section examines techniques the movement has used to communicate during General Assemblies such as "twinkling" to express approval (p. 60), the "mic check" to enhance communication (p. 59), and the "stack" to organize speakers (p. 60). This section also focuses on difficulties OWS has faced such as maintaining autonomy without being "co-opted" (p. 140), demonstrating a nonviolent image when members have committed violent acts (p. 117), and incorporating diversity into the group (p. 93). The final section provides direction for OWS by offering advice such as bolstering public support by promoting victories the Occupy Our Home initiative has achieved (p. 175),

utilizing the strengths of "skilled operatives" that range from chefs to lawyers (p. 163), and possibly working with outer movements (p. 208).

Akin to *Occupy Nation*, *Networks of Outrage and Hope* pinpoints aspects of OWS that draw on the movement's mobilization against corporate greed (p. 156), its expansion throughout the United States (pp. 164-165), and its creation of Working Groups, Caucuses, and Spokes to channel communication at General Assemblies (p. 183). Unlike *Occupy Nation*, it also conducts an extensive analysis of the influential revolutionary movements that emerged in 2010. Castells begins by documenting the Tunisian revolution against Ben Ali that was sparked by Mohamed Bouazizi's "self-immolation by fire" in front of a government building in protest of the police confiscation "of his fruit and vegetable stand" (p. 22). He also examines the Icelandic protest against Geir Haarde (p. 35), the Egyptian revolution against Mubarak and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (p. 56), the Arab uprisings that spread to places such as Algeria, Yemen, Sudan, Jordan, and Libya (pp. 93-94), and the Spanish *Indignadas'* call from Real Democracy Now! (p. 124).

When analyzing these movements, Castells continually draws on the importance modern technology has had in shaping how they communicate and organize worldwide (p. 221). This analysis relates to a history of research Castells has published on "the network society" (see Castells, 1996; 2002; 2002; 2007). Castells argues that modern technology has allowed social movements to mobilize in "the network society" (p. 4). In "the network society" social movements gain a whole new level of freedom to organize outside institutional networks. He states,

> Because mass media are largely controlled by governments and media
> corporations, in the network society communicative autonomy is primarily
> constructed in the Internet networks and in the platforms of wireless
> communications (pp. 9-10).

These new forms of communication permit social movements to organize through "multimodal" networks in both "cyberspace" and public space (p. 221). Cyberspace also offers a "global hypertext of information" and a "technological platform" which grants members more autonomy to express ideas and demands (p. 7). In regards to "the network society," it is important to note that there has been criticism on the significance of internet technology and activism. For example, Smith and Fetner (2010) point out that "access to technology varies widely cross-nationally and within countries" (p. 36).

Castells (2012) provides many examples of how "communication technology in the

digital age" has influenced contemporary social movements' organization (p. 6). For example, to spark the Tunisian revolution Bouazizi's cousin, Ali, "recorded the protest and distributed the video over the internet" (p. 22). After the event, protesters continued to organize on Facebook and Twitter "to debate and communicate" (p. 28). To show the link between technology and protest potential, Castells states, "Tunisia has one of the highest rates of Internet and mobile phone penetration in the Arab world" (p. 28). Prior to demonstrations in Tahrir Square, activists in Egypt also organized on Facebook through the "We are all Khaled Said" Facebook group that honored Said's death by the hands of police after he circulated a video showing police corruption (pp. 53-54). The internet became so important for activists that the Egyptian government even shutdown access, which alternatively created a backlash from the global community (p. 62). Regarding OWS, activists used Twitter to transmit information and a blog site called Tumblr to "humanize" the movement with stories from various members (p. 173). Modern technology also allowed these movements to influence and connect with each other internationally. For example, in the call to occupy Wall Street, *Adbusters* stated, "Are you ready for a Tahrir moment?" (p. 159) and, since "movements are viral," modern technology expedites and sustains worldwide resistance (p. 224).

When analyzing OWS, unlike Castells, Gitlin (2012) minimizes the importance that modern technology has had for the movement's development. He does note that *Adbusters* launched the call to occupy on the internet (p. 15), that camera phones were utilized to send pictures of police brutality (p. 32), that the movement utilized live-streaming (p. 5), and he reports on how the Facebook page for Khaled Said influenced the call to gather in Tahrir Square "so that cyberspace touched down on earth" (p. 216). In this context, his analysis is very much like Castells. However, Gitlin eventually minimizes the impact that technology has had for contemporary social movements. Regarding technological advancement, he states,

> The cascades of images, horizontal contacts, and related events have sped up
> enormously. But this most visible of differences from past revolts can be
> exaggerated. Before there were online videos, there were gossip networks,
> secret societies, broadsides, posters, [and] leaflets (p. 216).

He continues to state, "There were no underground papers, no cable news, no blogs or smartphones...yet information spread and things got done" (Gitlin, 2012, p.217). He affirms his point by providing an experience he had during a protest led by Students for a Democratic Society. He states that in 1965 they organized a sit-in to protest Chase Manhattan Bank for

bailing out the apartheid regime in South Africa (p. 217). To organize, members sent out bulletins to activists and, to inform prospective sit-inners, Gitlin and "the later-to-be writer Mike Davis" used what he describes as "an ancient instrument called a pay phone" (p. 217). Accordingly, Gitlin's overall analysis seems to be highly influenced by his writing on 1960's movements (See Gitlin, 1993; 2003).

It is significant that social movements of all historical epochs have found ways to utilize their communication capacities to achieve their goals. However, by downplaying the importance that modern technology has had in shaping contemporary movements, Gitlin (2012) erroneously isolates OWS from these movements and overemphasizes its connection to the 1960's movements. This allows him to consistently draw comparisons between these movements as if OWS was another movement that he worked with (or against) in the 1960s. For example, he compares OWS's democratic values with Students for a Democratic Society's beliefs (p. 81), he contrasts their nonviolent ethos from the Weathermen's violent protests (p. 128), and he compares the public support between OWS and the 1960's antiwar movement (p. 35). It can be beneficial to draw on similarities and differences that have occurred between social movements throughout time – it can reveal many important organization and mobilization trends. However, an overemphasis on this lessens the scope of analysis and minimizes important qualities that OWS has shared with contemporary movements that relate to current technological, political, and economic conditions. Contrarily, Castells (2012) recognizes these important similarities and conducts a more comprehensive analysis of OWS. Gitlin's analysis takes OWS and places it in the past; Castells' analysis takes OWS and places it alongside contemporary movements that have influenced its organization and mobilization techniques.

We are increasingly entering into a "global" era. In this era there have been widespread injustices committed worldwide. However, these injustices have also stimulated the organization and mobilization of individuals around the globe who have united to fight for peace and democracy. These revolutionary forces not only inhabit space in the public sphere; they also connect in cyberspace – they communicate and organize on levels that have never been traversed before. While *Occupy Nation* provides a compelling comparative analysis between OWS and past social movements, *Networks of Outrage and Hope* realizes the significance of present technological, political, and economic factors that shape how contemporary movements organize and mobilize together on an international level. In this

regard, Castells provides an important contribution for future work on these global movements.

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