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“Our economy, society, and culture are built on interests, values, institutions, and systems of representation that, by and large, limit collective creativity, confiscate the harvest of information technology, and deviate our energy into self-destructive confrontation. This state of affairs must not be.” (Castells 2000b, 379.)

The Place of Politics in Manuel Castells’s Network Society

Many of the critiques and commentaries of Manuel Castells’s work on network society (Crabtree 2002; Garnham 2004; Heiskala 2001; Susser 2001; Webster 2002) argue that his analysis stems from his earlier, openly Marxist-approached work (Castells 1977, Castells 1978) as well as his later economic research on modern capitalism (Castells 1989). As Risto Heiskala (2001, 36) argues, this background – added with influences from Alain Touraine, Daniel Bell, and Alvin Toffler – can be read out for example from the concepts (informational capitalism, cultural identity etc.) Castells applies in constructing his network agenda. After releasing his trilogy on the development of network society, Castells has emphasised that the trilogy is not an outcome of actual research process but, rather, it should be considered as “neutral tool” for analysing network society (Castells 2000c, 6). As Darin Barney argues, this view could be considered as one-sided:

“The distinction I am drawing here (in his book) is between the network society thesis as a tool of investigation and interpretation, and the rhetoric of the Network Society as an ideological discourse that serves a performative, prescriptive function. What I have attempted to suggest here is that our appreciation of the utility of the former must be tempered by a recognition of the liabilities of the latter.” (Barney 2004, 181.)

In his vast trilogy of the Information Age, (Castells 2000a, 2004, 2000b), Castells applies the concept of “network” to structurally describe all kinds of communication and transaction taking place in current society. In this paper, I define “network” as a computer-mediated, data-channelling network simultaneously both formed and applied by the network actors.¹ This definition is similar to one Castells has presented after writing his trilogy (Castells 2000c, 5–6; Castells 2004b, 3). In his trilogy, Castells is much more ambiguous in defining network. Rather than specifying the concept, Castells – as Jan van Dijk (2002, 24) notes – uses “network” as a “theory of everything”: a metaphor covering economic transaction system, social relationships, and ICT infrastructure (see also Aro 1999). As in Fritjof Capra’s (1996), Albert-László Barabási’s (2003) and Robert & William H. McNeill’s (2003) visions, in Castells’s trilogy where there is life, there are also networks.

Thus – instead of a theory of research – I consider Castells’s study on network society as a contemporary performative analysis of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century society, as Rosalind Williams (2004, 433) suggests. This perspective enables one to perceive Castells’s network society as an agenda in itself, or as a political tractate, which – in addition to just describing the world from allegedly neutral perspective – proactively constructs the phenomenon known as the network society, and simultaneously makes Castells a political actor in the context of network discourse.

At the same time to sketching what kind of society network society is, Castells defines in his analysis a prescriptive vision about what network society should be. As Kari Palonen has argued, this kind of agenda-setting goes beyond its original spatio-temporal context in the sense of finality; although the agenda may evoke further attempts to clarify it, specify its contents etc. all the following analyses are considered either as commentaries, updates, or critiques based on that one specific “original” agenda (Palonen 1998a, 183). In this sense, basically all of the network theories published since Castells’s analysis could be considered as discourse limited by Castells’s near-undisputed paradigm (Ankersmit 2002, 188). As Jean-Marie Guéhenno (2000, 58) notes, in an analogous fashion this setting resembles a computer-made analysis based on which a decision should be made, but the public discourse is limited only to arguments comparing different choices

¹ As Bruno Latour contends: “ANT (Actor-Network Theory) is not about traced networks, but about network-tracing activity...there is not a net and an actor laying down the net, but there is an actor whose definition of the world outlines, traces, delineates, describes, files, lists, records, marks or tags a trajectory that is called a network. No net exists independently of the very act of tracing it, and no tracing is done by an actor exterior to the net. A network is not a thing, but the recorded movement of a thing... It is no longer whether a net is a representation or a thing, a part of society or part of discourse or a part of nature, but what moves and how this movement is recorded.” (Latour 1996, 378)

in a sense of good or bad decision instead of questioning the actual computer-made analysis on which the decision should be based.

Theories, models, and visions concerning computer-mediated data networks can be roughly divided into two categories, when their view on how data should be distributed is considered (Peltola 2002, 50). The first group, originating from the early visionaries of computer networks of the late 1960s and early 1970s, considered data to be openly accessed and distributed (Barlow 1996; Lévy 1997; Rheingold 2002), whereas those arguing for more commercial approach (Gates 1995, 1999; Negroponte 1995, 1998) hold data mainly as an object for voluntary transaction between network actors, whether individuals or corporate agencies. Hence the discourse concerning security issues and data control has also increased significantly in the aftermath of 9/11 (Peltola 2004).

However, this kind of “periodization” may give the impression that the past may be easily divided into different definitive steps of change, and that the historical facts located on these steps form a synchronous spiral staircase: a coherent narrative of the information age. Also, no single “staircase theory” of recent history exists but, rather, a network of discourse, which consists of attempts to define some time period as an era of definitive transformation (see Beniger 1989). After all, Castells’s study on network society is in itself a part of this discourse network. As Darin Barney contends, network society is “one star among constellation of relatively recent attempts to understand and characterize an evolving range of interrelated social, political, economic and cultural forces” (Barney 2004, 25).

Any network agenda creates a specific sphere for political action, which – depending on how this agenda is set – includes and excludes different political actors, issues, and procedures. Basically this leaves little or no choice for potential network actors but to either accept or refuse this agenda. Therefore, instead of omitting the Castellsian approach of being the infinite cartographer or “stair-maker” of recent history, in this paper I analyse Castells’s network society from the viewpoint of politicization (see Häyhtiö 2004, 286–287; Palonen 1998b). Politicization – defined here as opening new alternatives in political decision-making – is opposed to “depoliticization”, which, by using the rhetoric of necessity, leaves no true option for discussing different alternatives. Thus the research question of this paper is to analyse how Castells sets his own network agenda, and what place or role politics has in that agenda.

This of course leads to discourse concerning the “right” place for politics as well as phenomenon defined as the “displacement of politics” (Ankersmit 2002; Ankersmit 2005; Honig 1993; Hänninen et al. 2000; Parvikko et al. 1998). However, my goal is not to argue whether there is a right place for politics in Castells’s network society. Rather, I analyse the “strategies of displacement” (see Hänninen 2000, 31–32) Castells applies in constructing his network agenda and locating politics.

Politics and Power in Network

In a recent interview book, Castells argues that “politics is the process whereby social groups can take control of government institutions and use them”, and later in the book he defines politics as “the ability to influence society in ways that favour some actors over others”. (Castells et al. 2004, 79). In this process – largely taking place in the media – individualised images compete with each other in an expensive game, which is in a constant jeopardy of becoming corrupted. According to Castells, the result is often less flattering to anyone involved in politics, which in network society has drifted apart from even any hints of moral virtues:

“Politics becomes a horse race, and a tragicomedy motivated by greed, backstage manoeuvres, betrayals, and, often, sex and violence – a genre increasingly indistinguishable from TV scripts.” (Castells 2000c, 13.)

Castells defines power in post-national network society as “the capacity to control global instrumental networks on the basis of specific identities” (Castells 2004a, 358). His almost slogan-like abbreviation about the network-era societies is that they are “increasingly structured around a bipolar opposition between the Net and the self” (Castells 2000a, 3). This dichotomy displaces nation-states from their traditional instrumentalist role for another kind of political structure in which nation-states’ sovereignty no more is self evident. The traditional state vs. citizen -dichotomy is also replaced with a new scenario, which emphasises the relationship between local identity and the global information flow.

Thus politics in network society cannot primarily be about gaining control over the state apparatus, since nation-states’ significance as sovereign “game-board” for politics has largely waned. This is of course contradictory to Castells’s earlier definition of politics: the process whereby social groups can take control of government institutions and use them. However, this contradiction can be

avoided by creating a dichotomy between “traditional” and “new” politics, the latter one defined as politics of the network era.

Castells defines this “new politics” as “informational politics”, and for him being a politician is also a professional career apart from being a member of some social movement. In the era of network society, politicians must possess strong *realpolitik*, because mission-driven politicians are sooner or later bound to perish:

“You also have to recall that people hate professional politicians. So that people in that career have to appear fresh while being ruthless. They have to seem like idealists but know how to put the knife in a rival’s back as a daily practice.” (Castells et. al. 2004, 81.)

Thus it would be the masses’ alleged heinous distrust toward politicians, added with the often-rude media coverage, which eventually transform politicians into extreme Machiavellists in network society. Therefore it comes as no surprise that in his study Castells considers politics, the state, democracy, and civil society to be all in a state of crisis (Castells 2004a, 70, 356, 367, 402). As cynical as Castells’s view may be, politics still has meaning in network society, since “societies change through conflict and are managed by politics” (Castells 2001, 137). For Castells, this change means primarily the maximization of “hacktivism” (see Jordan & Taylor 2004): resistance forces facing the global turbulences of network society (social movements’ influence over government etc.), but the key to successful resistance lies often – ironic enough – in applying the possibilities given by the very same network society (informal online citizen networks etc.).

In his study of the network society, Darin Barney argues that “in the network society, power and powerlessness are a function of access to networks and control over flows” (Barney 2004, 30). Taken literally, in computer-mediated network society this would make the managers of ICT infrastructure (i.e. Internet service providers, mobile phone operators) the ultimate power-holders of network society. In larger context controlling the network access would include all political, social, and technological structures that directly or indirectly act as “gatekeeper” to network. For Castells, power as a concept is more a synonym for traditional monopoly of violence applied by nation-states within their territory. The interesting thing in his concept of politics is that Castells differentiates politics from power:

“Politics is not power – power is very different, as the classic distinction between power and influence shows. Influence induces particular behavior, but power tells you “Now you will do this.” Power, as

many observers have said, is the capacity for violence, even though it exists in many forms, some purely symbolic.” (Castells et. al. 2004, 79.)

It would however be incorrect to argue that political power exists in network society only in the context of nation-states. Rather, Castells’s conception of power is an indirect consequence of his view on the crisis of nation-states. Since nation-states in most cases hold legal monopoly of violence within their territory, Castells, omitting David Held’s (1991, 1995) view, argues for increasing plurality of sources of authority, which inevitably diminishes nation-states’ significance, and brings forward the “network state”, as Castells prefers to call it.

Since nation-states are nodes among others in network society, their legitimacy becomes dependent on a “broader system of enacting and influence from multiple sources” (Castells 2004a, 357). This could also be considered as an inconsistency in Castells’s analysis. Although nation-states are arguably bound to lose ground in network society, it is mainly statistical data gathered from sovereign nation-states and their success on which the whole paradigm of Castells’s network society analysis on diminishing state sovereignty is based in the first place. Another contestable observation is Castells’s overtly negative attitude toward media. After all, it was the emergence of the printing press that arguably held a large role in the emergence of nation-states.

The Network Divide

In the network era, the theory of the state – as Castells argues – must be “recast to comprehend the practice of the network state in the context of what Habermas conceptualizes as the postnational constellation” (Castells 2004a, 359). Thus the alleged birth of the network state, as Frank Webster (2002, 121–123) contests, came about in a moment where the state as an institution – not mentioning the waning legitimacy of politics – doesn’t possess the best possible stronghold.

The “networked governance” (see Reinecke 1999) links traditional governmental institutions into networks that “cross the traditional borders of national jurisdiction and even territory” (Barney 2004, 136). Purportedly this challenges the idea of nation-state as a sovereign institution. Thus the network state could basically be defined in a twofold manner. The intra-national level emphasises the state as the co-ordinator of national, regional, and local governance, whereas international level considers the state as actor in global network of international politics, trade, and joint organizations.

In network era, the state is a player instead of the field on which the game of politics takes place, and because of this the state has no final word concerning the rules of the game.

The McLuhanian media-let style of politics Castells argues for emphasises symbolic and cultural codes, and the “outside” of this informational stream forms the political marginality of network (Castells 2004a, 367–370). The contest of defining the parameters of distributing the codes inside the network is a process one might describe as political action in network. This opens up the discourse of who in the first place is a legitimate political actor in network society. As Darin Barney argues:

“This means that a *minimum* condition of political action is access to, and presence and/or representation within, the arenas (i.e. mass communication media) in which these battles are engaged. It is for this reason that those who are systematically denied access to advanced information and communication media, or whose access to them is limited to passive consumption of commodified content, are not only economically disadvantaged in the network society, but also politically disenfranchised.” (Barney 2004, 122, original emphasis.)

However, securing the minimum condition of inclusion does not lead to equality in network society. Castells divides the actors of the network society in two categories in the sense of increasing social stratification: the interacting and the interacted. As Castells has it, not only are the messages segmented but they are also increasingly diversified by users of the media according to their personal interests (Castells 2000a, 402). Thus, in network society the “digital divide” (Baker et. al. 2004; Castells 2001; Kurikka 2002; Norris 2001, Norris 2004; Peltola 2003a; Servon et. al. 2004; van Dijk 2000b; Warschauer 2003) would be as much pertinent a concept inside the network as it is in deciding between those who have access to the network and those who are excluded from it.

Only presence in network permits communicability and socialization of one’s message. Hence – as Tiziana Terranova has argued – network environment produces also a phenomenon she defines as the “excommunicated”: those socially excluded from network, because they are unable or unwilling to meet the terms set for network inclusion (Terranova 2004, 145). Castells notes that the prize to pay for this inclusion is to adapt to the network’s “logic, to its language, to its points of entry, to its encoding and decoding” (Castells 2000a, 405). The Castellsian perspective leaves little hope for those unfortunate ones facing the negative effects of network society. As a concomitant of network society, a number of undesired effects are to emerge:

”Furthermore, the loss of a stable relationship to employment, and the weak bargaining power of many workers, lead to a higher level of incidence of major crises in the life of their families: temporary job

loss, personal crises, illness, drugs/alcohol addictions, loss of employability, loss of assets, loss of credit. Many of these crises connect with each other, inducing the downward spiral of social exclusion, toward what I have called “the black holes of informational capitalism,” from which, statistically speaking, it is difficult to escape.” (Castells 2000a, 375–376.)

The network society demands constant adaptation or – in Castells’s words – “reprogramming” as a part of the global production process (Castells 2000a, 372). This constant self-reflection crosses the traditional borders of *oikos* and *polis*, seamlessly combing the micro- and macro-levels of society as one vast network.

Castells defines for example active local policies as a counter-force to this line of development. At the same time, active participating in these measures becomes more or less obligatory in order to decrease the danger of becoming excommunicated. Because the network actors’ resources for operating are necessarily unequal, avoiding the “black holes of capitalism” requires large-scale public measures. The state’s role in realising these efforts is by no means small. Castells’s trilogy lists many downsides of network society, but he persistently refuses to define any specific measures for solving these problems. For Castells network society – despite its flaws – is still a positive phenomenon, but since its shortcomings, certain counter-measures are required:

“This tendency toward inequality and polarization is certainly not inexorable: it can be countered and prevented by deliberate public policies. But inequality and polarization are prescribed in the dynamics of informational capitalism, and will prevail unless conscious action is taken to countervail these tendencies.” (Castells 2000a, 375.)

On micro-level, Castells holds for example family as this kind of counter-force or “provider of psychological security and material well being” (Anttiroiko 1998; Castells 2000a, 380). Castells’s view is similar to for example Hannah Arendt’s idea of *oikos* as a “safe-house”, an ideal steady basis of amenities, which enables individuals’ political action in *polis* or public space. However, in network society the micro- and macro-levels are intertwined in such a scale that *oikos* cannot be excluded as a sphere apart from the rest of the network. In this sense, the dichotomy between private and public in Castells’s study is more relevant in his views concerning private capital and public policies aimed at alleviating its free-flowing.

The non-governmental counter-forces for existing power structures – social pressure groups etc. – may also apply latest technology successfully, as Castells’s often-quoted example of the Mexican Zapatistas shows (see Jordan 1999, 166–167; Lappalainen 2005). As Castells (2004a, 82–84) points out, it was essential in Zapatistas’ success to be able to build a “communication bridge” with

the media together with Internet-based alliance network. As the Ziapatistas could not rely on political institutions in any way in stating their case, the situation for example in Finland is somewhat different, at least if the official surveys and reports are to believe. The legitimacy of the Finnish political system among citizens is relatively high, but – ironic enough – this can also be considered to have partially caused the organisational inaction in realising the potential of network society in full. Actually, this line of development is arguably natural an outcome of political systems considered as stable and legitimate: if there is no pressure within to change, the outside influences are not enough to cause the change to occur.

The Network Order

Especially in his trilogy, Castells presents himself – not as one network actor among others – but as the “Great Network Cartographer”, existing safely aloof from the most destructive waves of the information stream (see Crabtree 2002). Castells also largely neglects the political nature of his own study:

“My main statement in that it does not really matter if you believe that this world, or any of its features, is new or not. My analysis stands by itself. This is our world, the world of the Information age. And this is my analysis of this world, which must be understood, used, judged, by itself, by its capacity, or incapacity, to identify and explain the phenomena that we observe and experience, regardless of its newness.” (Castells 2000a, 356 subtext 1.)

Defining oneself as existing in this Archimedean point-kind of outside observer position is of course uttermost political a statement, because if it were realistic, it would give Castells’s analysis the status of objective and neutral description of the network society. Rather – instead of passive observation from neutral vantage-point– Castells’s analysis is an important node in network society discourse because of its narration of the developmental history of network society. After all, it is this very history, which is the cornerstone for his whole network vision and many others following Castells’s path. This makes Castells’s study one significant actor among others in the struggle for hegemony concerning different network society visions. Thus Martin Ince’s (2004, 2) comment that Castells “refuses to let his research and analysis be biased by politics” could be considered as somewhat an overstatement.

The order in Castells's network society is very much order set by Manuel Castells. His Information Age trilogy is a holistic narrative, which defines the turning point between industrial capitalism and the allegedly new network society. This radical change is justified by reiterating vast empirical evidence, which legitimises his analysis as an inevitable outcome of a longer historical development. Castells's network society is also a combination of chaotic disorder and comprehensive exhaustiveness. On the one hand, it is up to individuals to mould their faith in the information age, but on the other hand this may not be possible without some kind of concordance or common set of rules everyone would follow.

From the viewpoint of individual network actor, this leaves little or no option for her to contemplate if to be a part of the network society or not. As Nicholas Garnham (2004, 177) argues, Castells's ideal individual automatically and willingly adapts to different networks and operates in them proactively. The responsibility of succeeding in the network society is ultimately left to individuals, because in the end it is up to individuals to reveal themselves – in Arendtian fashion – to other network actors and thus become the producers of network instead of being passively “networked” by others.

In the end, Castells does not aim at discussing the actual probability of the social and structural changes narrated in his network agenda. Moreover Castells narrates a “break” or “difference” between the industrial society and network society by reciting things, which do not exist anymore in our contemporary society (stable power elites, sovereign nation-states etc.). At the same time, he indirectly presents as an undisputed fact that these things used to exist in the past in the way he claims, and that their absence in the network era is the binding evidence of this allegedly revolutionary change.

In Castells's network society, personal choice is more like choosing directions in crossroads: the roads are already there, and one's personal (but networked) GPS system gives strong advice of what to do. Therefore also the destination – a combination of these decisions – is compatible with the larger picture, namely the image Castells's network analysis projects. For those inclined by this vision, Castells promises great things, or at least the possibility for pursuing them:

“The promise of the Information Age is the unleashing of unprecedented productive capacity by the power of the mind. I think, therefore I produce. In so doing, we will have the leisure to experiment with spirituality, and the opportunity of reconciliation with nature, without sacrificing the material well-being of our children. The dream of the Enlightenment, that reason and science would solve the problems of humankind, is within reach.” (Castells 2000a, 390.)

It is however notable that there are certain preconditions Castells defines for his network society. For example global criminal economy is not part of Castells's ideal network society, although he sees no true option for excluding it from network society. However, in conceptual level Castells actually does that by defining global criminal economy as the "perverse connection" of network society (Castells 2000a, 169). This is interesting, because what this perverse connection consists of is very much the same actors traditionally considered as illegal in the eyes of national and international legislation. Since national and also international legislation faces the same structural crisis in the network era as for example nation-states, Castells's approach to this issue is primarily – and surprisingly – moral instead of emphasising the virtue of strength:

"The collective fascination of the entire planet with action movies where the protagonists are the players in organized crime cannot be explained just by the repressed urge for violence in our psychological make up. It may well indicate the cultural breakdown of traditional moral order, and the implicit recognition of a new society, made up of communal identity and unruly competition, of which global crime is a condensed expression." (Castells 2000a, 211.)

As Kai Eriksson (2003, 135) notes, if Castells's agenda were carried out in its fullest form, these kind of "perverse choices" would not be a part of network in the first place. Rather, there would be different nodes or crossroads of "proper" choices, added with occasional "dysfunctions" or – in Guéhenno's words – "misunderstandings": a concept he uses in describing the networked world, which he calls the "imperial age":

"The imperial age does not tolerate conflict, which it calls misunderstanding. It needs similarity. In place of a structural hierarchy, it offers the benefits of teamwork. Instead of polarity of power, it prefers an ever more advanced circulation of information, the object of which is to dissolve conflict by a multitude of precautionary microadjustments." (Guéhenno 2000, 77.)

Guéhenno's argument – together with Castells's earlier consideration about societies changing through conflicts – would make network society an environment, which basically requires continuous conflicts to develop even further, but at the same time these conflicts should not endanger the existence of network by questioning its value basis. As Jost van Loon (2004) has it, without a "sense of obligation" or an "appreciation of the bound nature of value", networks are unlikely to sustain themselves.

As noted in the beginning, the descriptive and prescriptive levels often collide and even fuse in Castells's study on network society. For example, although Castells criticises those longing for more "orderly" kind of society, he simultaneously brings into existence a new social order, the

order of the Network Society. In realising this order, Castells stresses the significance of active subjects equipped with a certain sense of morality. Thus the descriptive discourse concerning network society transforms into prescriptive and often-moral discourse. As Darin Barney argues:

“Vocabularies such as that provided by the network society thesis do not only describe what is, they also establish expectations for what might, or should, be... As an alleged fact, the Network Society becomes the standard for what is normal, desirable, and for what we can reasonably expect...At its most advanced level of articulation, the discourse of the Network Society not only normalizes present conditions, but also justifies political, social and economic measures that might otherwise be negotiable. At this point, to choose but one example, changes in labour law that support the casualization of the workforce can be uncritically justified because we live in a Network Society.” (Barney 2004, 178–180).

When taken to extreme, Castells leaves no chance or option for subjects for diverting themselves from the ultimate network bond between the Net and the Self. The choice the network actor faces in this situation is limited to contemplate *how* to be in network, not whether to be or not to be in network. The network enables actors to make personified instead of personal choices, and regardless of what one chooses, the final result is always compatible with the big picture of network society, since the freedom of choice in orderly network society is largely predetermined.

Conclusion

The narrative of the recent past of the informational capitalism Castells constructs cannot be told without a narrator, who eventually decides the perspective of that narrative. Also, it is not one story Castells tells but actually two stories; one is about what kind of society networks society is, and the other tells the story about how network society should be. The fact that Castells refuses to acknowledge the political nature of his analysis does not remove the element of political from it, but rather politicises it even further. After all, Castells does indirectly ask uttermost political a question, which network society brings forward: if each actor *could* in theory be connected to each other in network society, which actors *should* then be connected?

In network, individual actor’s history is a personal log, and only the parts linked in network are visible to other actors. The internal history of the network is a closed “collective register”, which records this action taken place in network. From this perspective, political action in network could be reduced to Arendtian self-revealing in public (although with limited access) space, should

network be considered as such. On the other hand, if one omits – following Arendt and Nietzsche – the standpoint that there are no actual or original subjects behind some action, the network actor and her action, which takes place in network, become more or less a synonym, because the action taken place in network is the very thing based on which the actor is judged by other network actors.

In Castellsian network context, political conflicts could be defined as struggles between powerful network nodes. Network actors with superior resources become the active politicians compared to the “networked”, those without proper resources for operating successfully in network. The art of politics in network would then consist of abilities to operate as a powerful active link in the ceaseless information stream by “making sense of knowledge”: gathering, editing, distributing, and manipulating data, and that way strengthening one’s own status in network.

However, if Castells is to believe, no link or node may cause conflicts, which would jeopardise the whole existence of network. The “common good” of network thus supersede the interests of an individual network actor. In other words, the “means for politicking” in network are directly or indirectly predefined by the “network administrator” (in this particular case Manuel Castells). This idea of preserving the network is well inherent in Castells’s analysis concerning order in network society. Thus each actor must or at least should practise constant self-reflection in analysing whether her action is compatible with the network code of conduct or not.

Where Frank Ankersmit considers nation-state as an important node also in the network society, Castells openly questions its role and significance. Moreover, Castells emphasises the individuals’ and different social movements’ role in developing network society further from within (with occasional help from the waning nation-states). Thus the network actors have from this viewpoint – not choice – but more like an obligation to become active in network. This is important also because Castells’s network society is not an outside-led harmonious construction but an organic composition requiring contribution by each and every one of its units to guarantee its success.

If an actor does not produce anything in network, she basically does not exist from the viewpoint of network action, nor has she the possibility to “empower” herself in network because of her lack of proactive measures. On the other hand, assimilating actors in network also creates a situation where those unwilling or unable to assimilate themselves become “excommunicated” from network. It is also interesting that, according to Castells, this process of assimilation would be important both from the viewpoint of the individual and the network, as if network society as a whole were based

on predetermined Rousseauian contract of *volonté digital*. This is close to something that could be – echoing Foucault’s conception of power/identity production – defined as “controlled particularity” (Peltola 2004, 2006). In controlled particularity, network actors proactively aim at pursuing goals set in some network agenda without the need of direct dictation or surveillance, because the law or code of desired conduct is immanent in network itself.

The alleged expert network analysis (with strong moral undertone) of Manuel Castells gives the impression that the central elements of network society are already in place, and there is little or no choice for individuals, organisations, nation-states, or politics in general but to adapt to this situation by taking advantage of network society as effectively as they can. In this sense, Castells questions the significance of politics as process and indirectly hints that the network era is not necessarily very favourable for politics. Rather, the media-oriented politics – added with the ever-existing potential for corruption – reveal itself to Castells as such immoral an action that he clearly has difficulty in finding a proper place for politics in network society of his taste.

As in political sense the attempt for succeeding in some network of discourse means pursuing for hegemony over one’s competitors, the fundamental point in Castells’s study is that the political preconditions of network society are no more contestable, and it is Castells’s own network agenda, which is the self-proclaimed winner of this political struggle.

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