Manuel Castells, **Rupture: The Crisis of Liberal Democracy**, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018, 136 pp., $49.94 (hardcover), $14.60 (paperback).

Reviewed by
Magdalena Day
National University of Cuyo, Argentina

Manuel Castells' latest book, **Rupture: The Crisis of Liberal Democracy**, tries to make sense of today's political scenario, which, for the author, is characterized by "the rupture of the relationship between those who govern and the governed" (p. 4). *Rupture* focuses on the lack of trust in political institutions, like governments, as being at the heart of the crisis of liberal democracy, which delegitimizes the traditionally accepted models of political representation. On the other hand, the author's purpose is to show how Brexit, the crises of political parties in Spain, and the problems of today's European Union are examples of this representation crisis.
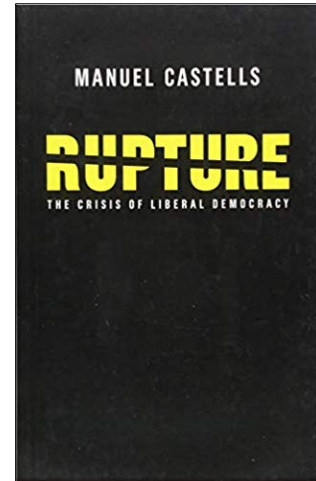
Rupture is also a bold step for an empiricist like Castells, who has traditionally published encyclopedic books of social theory and who offers with *Rupture* a pocket version of political analysis for the public. To prove this point, we should probably start at the end: the appendix, titled "How to Read This Book." This is one of the few times that Castells avoids filling a book with statistical tables and data of any sort. Instead, he offers that type of information as a backup for readers to consult on the editor's website at their leisure.

Rupture can also be read as the need to shorten the distance between grand theory and citizens, especially with those citizens who need to engage in the political implications of the network society. Therefore, one should not expect to find in this book new paths of Castells' theory of power or of the network state's dynamics, but rather, a cross-cultural analysis of political reality.

The book is divided into five chapters, and four of them have their data (such as surveys about political and economic confidence, perception of trust in governments, voting intentions, sympathy toward social movements, etc.) uploaded to the publisher's website. Bibliography is also available online.

The first chapter goes through the different origins of the representation crisis, which, for Castells, has a beginning in the global financial crisis of 2008, which he analyzed in depth in previous books (*Aftermath*, 2012; *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 2015; *Another Economy is Possible*, 2017). But this is the first time that he presents to us a microscopic analysis of the leaders, and political parties, which he considers are proof of the end of institutions as we know them.

This first chapter, titled "The Crisis of Democratic Legitimacy: They Do Not Represent Us," goes through cases of corruption that have undermined the credibility of institutions and national states at the origins of this political crisis. Here, Castells affirms that "the political identity of citizenship, built on

statehood, is being replaced by diverse cultural identities that convey a meaning beyond the boundaries of the political" (p. 15). In this regard, today's politics is not about representation based on common interests, but in the ability to express agency and to construct meaning through communication networks.

The second chapter, titled "Global Terrorism: The Politics of Fear," refers to the political exploitation of the fear caused by immigration and foreigner presence in different countries. Radicalization and extremism around the world give place to what Castells calls a feeling of "permanent emergency" (p. 25), which resembles Giorgio Agamben's (2005) "state of exception." This state of exception implies the normal coexistence of people's lives with war, terrorism, and the discretionality of governments in their use of military force in order to defend their citizens.

The third chapter, titled "The Rebellion of the Masses and the Collapse of Political Order," is dedicated to analyzing Trump, Macron, and Brexit. The author places Trump's presidency as a "defining element of the chaotic maelstrom currently engulfing liberal democracy" (p. 52). In the case of Brexit, Castells analyzes different causes for the failure of European integration (which he calls the "European Disunion"; p. 75). He states that one of those causes is the perceived effect of immigration in the job market, by citizens. Also, he states that the "resistance to being dependent on global movements and cosmopolitan culture is what really lies beneath this, forming the foundations of Brexit society" (p. 63). Therefore, those Britons who are not prepared to export their skills and adapt to a knowledge and information–based lifestyle rejected Brexit for their own survival, in Castells' view.

In reference to France's political events and the 2008 financial crisis, the author argues that "in people's minds, this crisis was associated with globalization, rejected by some 60 per cent of all citizens, in contrast to the 62 percent of professionals who were in favor of open borders" (p. 68). Minds, meaning, and media communication networks are at the heart of what Castells calls his "theory of power" (Castells, 2013). But the sources for this one statement are not official statistics or interviews made by Castells' team, but the metrics such as the Edelman Trust Barometer (which focuses on brands, technology companies, and governments and is made by an international public relations consulting firm) and polling firms such as Ipsos.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to Castells' own country and titled "Spain: Social Movements, The End of Two-Party Politics and the Crisis of the State." The commitment of the author in this chapter is expressed in his opinions and narrative. What he calls the implosion of Spain's two-party system is included in the analysis as well as a chronicle of his encounter with Pedro Sánchez in California, which he mentions as proof of his "long-time support to lost causes" (p. 112). In regard to Catalunya's independent project (which he calls "the Catalan question"), it is questionable whether Castells' support to this project is political or if it aims at seeing how his dream of an independent network-state comes to fruition.

In the fifth chapter, titled "In the Shady Clarity of Chaos," the author's objective is to prove that a new world is rising. After crisis and chaos, Castells claims that what counts is changing people's minds in order to create a new order. Networked social movements that emerge from the type of crises described are responsible for that change (pp. 132–133). This is a synthesis of Castells' conceptualization of social movements, which reflects the opposition between the logic of global networks, capital, and people's

identities based in their localities. Changing people's minds for Castells is about constructing meaning around projects through communication and networks first. And later about mobilizing social movements in order to transform their daily lives, which he has already observed as a worldwide reality (Day, 2018).

To summarize, the book gives us a mix of Castells' academic work and his analysis as a political commentator. The underlying relationships established among the diverse elements of his theories are consistent: power in networks; the network state; and the reconfiguration of sovereignty, social movements, and so on.

For those who have read and analyzed Castells' work, this would be an updated taste of his previous works. But for the new reader, this is certainly an introduction and an exemplary case of the application to reality of an acclaimed and integrated framework of social theory.

In terms of weaknesses of the book, there is a journalistic tone in some cases, especially in the chapter dedicated to Trump, whom Castells fiercely condemns. Also, most references about Trump are from journalistic articles, while the analysis that is backed up by research is available when he refers to Macron and Spain.

Lastly, there is a need to go back to the author's emphasis on trust. If Castells (2005) stated in his trilogy, *The Information Age*, that we live in a network society, he made it clear that the revolution behind this emergent society was digital. But "digital" for Castells is just the current technology, a momentum in a larger development of the Information Age. In this way, trust is not only what builds relationships among citizens and governments, but is also today's currency. It is the bedrock of Bitcoin and the blockchain technology behind it. Castells already included a brief chapter of this subject in another book (Castells et al., 2017), with a focus on trust as a value in networks, so we should probably pay attention to the underlying research trajectories that this multifaceted author is showing to us in *Rupture*.

References

Agamben, G. (2005). *Estado de excepción. Homo sacer, II, I* [State of exception. Homo Sacer, II, I]. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Adriana Hidalgo Editora.

Castells, M. (2005). *La Era de la Información, Vol. I La Sociedad Red* [The Information Age, Vol. 1, The network society]. Madrid, Spain: Alianza Editorial.

Castells, M. (2012). *Aftermath. The cultures of the economic crisis*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Castells, M. (2013). *Communication power.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of outrage and hope. Social movements in the Internet age* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Castells, M. (Editor). (2017). *Otra Economía es Posible: Cultura y economía en tiempos de crisis* [Another economy is possible: Culture and economy in a time of crisis]. Madrid, Spain: Alianza Editorial.

Day, M. (2018) De la identidad a la autonomía: los movimientos sociales en red en la obra de Manuel Castells. [From identity to autonomy: Networked social movements in Manuel Castells' work]. Book Review. *MILLCAYAC Digital Journal of Social Sciences, V*(8), 187–194. Retrieved from http://revistas.uncu.edu.ar/ojs/index.php/millca-digital/article/view/1109/698