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PhD thesis summary

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Indymedia in the functioning of new social movements. Study on the example of the alterglobalist movement

This thesis tackles the issue of the role of the Indymedia platform/collective, which operates both locally and globally, in the functioning of new social movements, in particular the global injustice movement sometimes referred to as the alterglobalist movement.

The overriding aim of this thesis is to present the influence of online alternative media – the Indymedia platform/collective – on the changes in communication and political empowerment of activists fighting for global justice in the period between the 90s of the 20th century and the second decade of the 21st century.

The starting hypothesis of this thesis is based on the assumption that the advent of a technological instrument enabling communication among numerous participants of social and political process (the instrument in question is defined as Independent Media Centres/Indymedia platform(s)) has a significant impact on the political empowerment of those activists, on the effectiveness and prominence of social movements, as well as on media activism progress.

The thesis consists of an introduction, five interrelated chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter, entitled „The idiosyncrasy and role of new social movements”, aims at presenting the origins, specificity and function of new social movements and their theoretical aspects. The author finds it crucial to refer to some findings on new social movements, in particular M. Castell's concept and I. Wallerstein's perspective, as well as to critically analyze the role of communication in those movements' activities.

The next chapter, entitled „Online media environment as a context for the development of the Indymedia collective”, concerns the second, equally important issue of this thesis, namely

the technological context caused by the advent of the world wide web, its evolution and the changes it brought about in the circle of media.

The third chapter, entitled „The sources of the pioneering journalist activity of Indymedia”, discusses and analyzes the relations between Indymedia and other alternative media, and the aims and innovations of civil journalism based on participating in Web 2.0 and its latest variants.

In the fourth chapter, entitled „Indymedia as a platform for social and political activity”, the author attempts to specify the social origins of Indymedia, mostly taking into consideration the Mexican Zapatista movement, which has been active since the 90s of the 20th century and the alterglobalist movement. This chapter discusses the social and political potential of Indymedia and its capabilities in terms of political communication among social movements.

The last chapter, entitled „Indymedia after two decades of activity – current state, innovations and challenges”, comprises three parts: the analysis of the current state of the collective, the summary of the most crucial innovations implemented by the collective and considerations upon the causes of the platform's erosion and the biggest challenges ahead, which may influence its further progress.

The conclusion revises all initial hypotheses, pinpoints the most crucial challenges and implications for further research and forecasts the direction of development.

Key words: Indymedia, alternative media, alterglobalist movement, global justice movement, online alternative media