COLLECTIVE ACTION SOCIO-TECHNICAL SYSTEMS

Studying the nexus between social media and political participation through a multidimensional network approach

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ECPR – Joint Sessions, Mainz, 11-16 March 2013
Definitional starting points

- SOCIAL MEDIA (SM): that group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC)’ (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010:61)

- COLLECTIVE ACTION (CA): that set of social practices i) involving simultaneously a number of individual or groups; ii) exhibiting similar morphological characteristics in contiguity of time and space; iii) implying a social field of relationship and vi) the capacity of people involved of making sense of what they are doing (Melucci 1996:20)
Daunting questions

- What happens to CA as we used to know it? (see Earl and Kimport 2011)
- What is the place and the role of online activism?
- What is the place and the role of offline activism?
- How do structural dimensions of CA deploy today when SM change radically communication patterns?
A hard direction of causality

- ‘technologies are as much social as they are material (in the sense that material features were chosen and retained through social interaction) and organizations are as much material as they are social (in the sense that social interactions are enabled and constrained by material properties)” (Leonardi 2009:299)

- Instead of imposing an order of priority, we find a way to connect CA and SM
Sociomaterial approach

- CA dynamics seen as the imbrication of two agencies: social and technological
- More than counting technology in:
  - Direct agency based on technology materiality
  - Material agency derives from a social stimulus
- A change in the nature of CA towards multidimensionality
Three advantages

- Avoiding sensationalism or extremism
- Resolving the dichotomy between online and offline activism
- Identifying what is constitutive of social media and assessing how it complements offline dynamics
Crystallizing multidimensionality

Relational Infrastructure
results from the totality of social relations:
- established between social actors (individual and/or organizational);
  - mediated and non-mediated,
  - based on co-presence and on distance

Physical/Technical Infrastructure
results from the totality of physical and technical networks on top of which social relations are built:
- Physical (e.g., roads, airplanes routes, power grid)
- Mass media (radio, television, press)
- IOTs (Internet, Web)

Socio-technical Systems
Space: hybrid
Time: diversified
Structure: fully multidimensional networks
Collective Action Socio-Technical Systems (CASTSs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective Action</th>
<th>CASTSs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A set of social practices</td>
<td>A set of sociomaterial practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>1) involving simultaneously a number of individuals and groups</td>
<td>1) involving simultaneously a number of individual, groups and technologies (analogue and/or digital)</td>
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<td>2) exhibiting similar morphological characteristics in contiguity of time and space</td>
<td>2) aimed at achieving/demanding a public good</td>
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<td>3) implying a social field of relationship and</td>
<td>3) exhibiting similar morphological characteristics also in discontinuity of time and space</td>
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<td>4) the capacity of people of making sense of what they are doing</td>
<td>4) implying a multidimensional and hybrid field of relationship</td>
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SM within CASTSs

- Act simultaneously on framing and collective identity dynamics according to different materialities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Type</th>
<th>Contribution to CASTSs</th>
<th>Peculiarity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Microblog</td>
<td>Issue construction</td>
<td>Generalized and participated framing</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNSs</td>
<td>Community Building</td>
<td>Group convergence around themes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video-sharing</td>
<td>Collective memory</td>
<td>Reproduction of events and motivations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture-sharing</td>
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Tracing and analyzing SM activism through multidimensional networks
Application – Se non ora, quando?
Se non ora quando – month 1, Jan 2011
Snoqtube channel