

Book Review: *The Logic of Connective Action*

Connective action is a term used to describe the relevance of the social media in the contemporary protest movements. The experience from the Put People First (PPF) in England, 15M in Spain and the Occupy movement in the United States summarizes the relevance. *The Logic of Connective Action* is one of the latest books on the topic. It is written by W. Lance Bennett, a professor of political science at University of Washington, and Alexandra Segerberg, a research fellow. The aim of the paper is to give a comprehensive review of the book outlining its purpose and organization. The paper also provides a critical evaluation of the book and indicates the weakness and stronghold of the book.

The book asks a timely question, “How digitally networked action works in an era of increasingly personalized political participation.” The premise of the book is that the overall decline in membership of civic and political organizations over a long period of time alongside the personalized lifestyles and media practices that suggests engagement of people with politics may have changed (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). To comprehensively analyze this change, Bennett and Segerberg introduced an updated concept of ‘connective action’. This is quite analogous to the former logic of connective action despite the fact that it majors on how to turn the social media sharing into ‘public engagement’ (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005).

Therefore, the main claim of the book is the difference in ideas of the connective and collective action. The two are the different logics that organize the protest movements. In the connective action, social actors can sustain up to the building strength given time. This is attained by a combination of the online media activities and some related offline activities. Hence, the main claim of the book is that the media sharing can be directly converted to the

public engagement, and policy focus is the mass media impact (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). The book aims at achieving a point where individuals share personal frames that are deduced from the inclusive ideas.

The book is organized in such a way to present a continuous flow of ideas and facts. The comparison of the connective and collective action gives a prior outlook of the book. There is a close relationship between the two. However, the book later concentrates on the connective action and its adaptability. The ideas flow from the personalized communication in protest networks in chapter two through the network, power and political outcomes in the fifth chapter. This provides systematic information, which is easy to follow and understand. The book explains that in some cases, connective action emerge from crowds that shun leaders while in other cases, conventional political organizations deploy personalized communication logics to enable large-scale engagement with a variety of political causes. Therefore, the authors show the nature, in which power is organized in communication-based networks and also the nature of the resultant political outcome (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

In the first chapter of the book, the logic of connective action develops three distinct differences as compared to the collective action. For instance, introduction of the types of the connective action, the crowd enabled and the organization enabled action display the difference. The collective action does not necessarily have any of the two. This directs to the three ideal action types including collective action, and the two more types of personalized action (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005). The two more types are distinguished by the level of involvement of formal organizations in facilitating the connective communication logic. This is realized practically as the Occupy Movement is crowd-enabled action network, whereas the Put People First (PPF) is more of an organization-enabled network (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

The second chapter of the book focuses on the ‘personalized communication in protests network.’ The two coalitions linked to the Great Twenty (G20) summit of 2009 are compared. The coalitions are the Organization-enabled PPF and the Meltdown, which was a classic collective action network. Two main elements are considered important in large-scale connective action formations. First, the political content presented as easily personalized ideas such as the PPF in the London 2009 summit or ‘we are the 99 percent’ (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). These personal action frames are inclusive of different personal reasons for contesting a situation that needs to be changed. Secondly, several personal communication technologies that enable sharing these themes are equally important. The process of communication mostly involves intensive personalization through the spreading of digital connections regardless of the mode of communication employed (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005). The two seem to be the reasons beyond the realized array of personal action frames that spread through social media. This strengthens the claim of the connective action.

The impact of the digital media on the connective action is outlined in the third chapter of the book. The two 2009 networks greatly explain the take of the digital media. At this point, the crowd-enabled action as in M15 protests is compared to the organization-enabled one as in the London case. The two narrows to an explanation on how to sort out what organizational processes contribute to collective and connective action networks. Therefore, the issue of the technology enabled networks of the personalized communications involves more than information exchange (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005). For instance, the book reveals that the flexible nature of DNA greatly improves the communication systems.

From the analysis, the book outlines that the ‘crowd-sourced’ gatekeeping of the Copenhagen Twitter stream was more consisted as compared to the organization-enabled

London stream. Therefore, the relevance of the connective communication over the collective communication is revealed. In addition to that, action networks increase quickly because of the effectiveness of the sharing technology and simple action frame. In turn, this will invite analytical attention to the network as an organizational structure in itself.

The fourth chapter of the book considers the role of the public in the organization-enabled networks. The nature of the trade networks in the United Kingdom and Germany greatly rely on this. The book reveals that the role of the public engagement is critical in all action networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). However, to introduce the conditions that affect the organization-enabled connective action, the opportunities and the trade-offs within the political environment need to be identified.

The network, power and political results are also compared in the United Kingdom's organization-enabled Robin Hood Tax (RHT) network against the Crowd-enabled occupy movement in the United States. The aim is to give a clear indication on the role of power in different types of connective action networks. The book introduces an idea of 'power signatures' to rate the lever, to which recognition is concentrated or dispersed within the actors of the network. The various roles of the concerned individuals are also recognized at this point (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). The power organization and how its conditions are set are also revealed. The connective action networks indicate that regardless of the environment of application, both networks will always manage to 'change the conversation.'

The issue of logic collision in communication networks is significant. Bennett and Segerberg introduce the issue aiming at providing a substantial solution in the event of collision. The rise of the internal strife within action networks is among the issues brought by the logic collisions. Therefore, within limits of the 'fundamentally different ideals and ideologies of

organization and action', there are collisions over online deliberation technologies after the encampment phase (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005).

In general, the book is of great relevance to the audience and specifically the communication technology sector. It gives comprehensive information on the relationship between the collective and connective network systems. The fact that the book concentrates on the less familiar connective action network systems serves the purpose. Therefore, the conclusion of the book matches its premises. The primary mission of the book was to give an explanation on 'how digitally networked action works in an era of increasingly personalized political participation' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). The book first relates to the basic working of the digital networks. In addition to the underlying working principle, the book manages to provide the link between the various factors that affect digital networks and the network itself.

The book outlines an original conceptual vocabulary that is reinforced by the notion of 'connective action', which provides the base argument and thereafter the conclusive part. The systematic flow of views and facts in the book makes it succeed in its primary mission. The use of comparisons between the connective actions and the collective actions aids in convincing the audience on the adaptability and compatibility within the digital communication systems. The development of various methodological innovations around web crawling and other digital techniques that are presented in the book prove the viability of the book (media/anthropology).

Bennett and Segerberg update generations of social scientific thought about collective action and contentious politics. This makes the book achieve other missions and purposes that it does not primarily intends to achieve. This promotes the success of the book and audience satisfaction. It also informs on the trends in communication, networks, and the personalization of politics (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). The interrelationship between the three is quite important

in analyzing the issues emerging from the digital communication systems and specifically the connective and collective action networks. In the book's innovative and theoretically fresh analysis, the organization-driven collective action is distinguished in two forms of connective action. This greatly contributes to the success of the book and audience satisfaction. The book also clarifies that an action can arise even in the absence of central organization. This aids in the general understanding of contentious politics and social movements across disciplines.

It is also the aim of the book to convince the audience and the concerned industry. To achieve this, the book has provided a comparison of the unknown with the known. This easily wins the attention and interest of the audience. For instance, the book examines the organizational dynamics that emerges when communication becomes a prominent part of organizational structure. First, it first gives a proposal that understanding such variations in large-scale action networks requires distinguishing between at least two concerned logics (Earl & Kimport, 2011). Then, the book uses the familiar logic of collective action associated with high levels of organizational resources and the formation of collective identities to introduce the less familiar logic of connective action. Further, it systematically informs that the latter is based on personalized content sharing across media networks. This leaves the reader convinced on the relevance of the latter.

In addition to that, the book provides a clear relationship between the two. This simplifies the process of buying one over the other. For example, the book states that introducing digital media does not change the core dynamics of the action in the collective action networks. In the case of the connective action networks, the core dynamics change. To clarify on this difference, the book gives three distinct types of large-scale action networks that are becoming prominent in today's contentious politics. This fact also contributes to the convincing factor of the book.

In addition to that, *The Logic of Connective Action* tries to solve the issue of power, which is among the most significant problems of social network analysis (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). This buys the acceptance of the book by other scholars currently attacking power from other angles such as the field theory. This enlarges the circle of those ready to buy the ideas of the book as well as embrace them in the digital communication networks. The issue of power also attracts other politically incited individuals to follow on the issue of the connective action logic (Earl & Kimport, 2011). The book generally achieves its goal to convince various readers and scholars while a good number may choose to do much on the logic.

Similar to any other book, *The Logic of Connective Action* has various strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of the book aid it in succeeding in its purpose whereas the weaknesses challenge the success. To start with, the book has more strengths as compared to weaknesses. The systematic flow of ideas and facts in the book is actually one of the strengths of the book. It is quite easy and interesting to follow the flow from the first chapter to the last. The chapters are closely related to one another though address different ideas. After the introduction of the logic, the factors surrounding it are revealed simultaneously. For instance, the issue of personalized communication in protests network and the role of digital media are well placed one after the other.

Secondly, *The Logic of Connective Action* is introduced at a time when the logic of collective action has already gained popularity . This provides a stepping stone for the author in explaining the logic as if deriving the facts from an already existing logic. The book also has a perfect diction. This appropriate choice of words has greatly contributed to the success of the book as well as building on its convincing ability. The inclusion of the issue of power contributes greatly to the book sales.

On the other hand, the book has a number of weaknesses that hinder its effectiveness. In particular, there are two main weaknesses that greatly hinder the effectiveness and efficiency of the book. First, the authors mostly employ more ‘boring’ technical sections to be read by non-specialists. This may make some readers bored and lose interest in the book. In addition to that, most of the chapters are rather lengthy and full of unnecessary repetitions. This adds on the ‘boring’ nature of the book to some readers. Secondly, the book fails to fully explain the logic of connective action. Despite the fact that the idea of connective logic action drives the book, it is left unexplained. This may be quite enough to some scholars but for a specialist, the information given on the logic of connective action is really shallow (Earl & Kimport, 2011). This could have been avoided by purely majoring on the logic instead of other lengthy comparisons and unnecessary details. The little information given arises questions, especially on the impact of power on the connective action logic.

In conclusion, *The Logic of Connective Action* provides comprehensive information on the collective action and connective action networks. The book aims at responding on how digitally networked action works in an era of increasingly personalized political participation. It uses the facts of the known collective action logic to introduce the connective action logic. The book is organized in paragraphs, with most of them being lengthy and much detailed. It gives a clear explanation of several factors and the role they play in the connective action logic. The relevance of the social media on contemporary protest movements is finally brought to light by the facts communicated in the book. The book generally manages to succeed in its mission whereby personally, I am convinced of its claims. The main strength of the book is its flow of ideas and diction. However, the book abounds in lengthy paragraphs that may bore the reader. The information given on the logic of connective action is also not sufficient for a specialist.