Discern Social Movements in the Digital Age

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Recommended Citation

BOOK REVIEW

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Carty, Victoria. 2018. Social Movements and New Technology. New York: Routledge. xvi+224 pages.

Now, generally, a couple of lovers will not be as worried as in the past if they must to experience a long distance relationship. They do not have to say "we should break up" due to a distance problem. They still able to communicate intensively, using social media, instant messaging apps, or video call apps. Indeed, the existence of digital technology has changed our ways to communicate, interact, and behave in daily life. However, how about the role of digital technology utilization in social activism? Does it have influenceability too?

Victoria Carty, through her book Social Movements and New Technology, attempted to answer those questions by choosing social movements as a theme specifically. Carty analyzed "the how" and "the why" of digital technology utilization become crucial in social movements, by taking several cases of social movements that occurred in the digital age. The theories of a social movement that have existed were used as a tool to analyze. Additionally, she offered variations on those theories due to the intervention of digital technology factor that has changed the dynamics, strategy, tactics, and structure in social movements. The crucial roles of digital technology utilization in social movements according to Carty are to help mobilization of resources, simplify framing efforts, facilitate strategy and tactics that are undertaken, to determine public opinion, and restructure collective actions.

One of cases that was used to explain both functions of to help mobilization of resources and simplify framing efforts is Moveon.org (a progressive public policy advocacy group and political action committee in US). Moveon has utilized websites, Facebook, Twitter, and e-mail

to communicate, discuss, and share information and knowledge about issues among its members. Even its members have kept on share the information and knowledge to their social networks in cyberspace. This method has made supporters and members of Move on likely to increase. This method is also able to generate a frame on an issue that is potentially culminated into political actions. Members of Moveon not only undertake a political action on the streets, but also collect funds through a certain website to support progressive politicians in order to they win an election.

Through this Moveon case, Carty offered variations on the resource mobilization theory and cultural theory of a social movement. Social movements in the past tended to depend either on the role of a leader or an organization to undertake these parts, mobilizing resources, framing an issue, accessing and dominating media companies (a conventional way), and collecting a fund—usually it was obtained from politicians or large organizations. This is clearly different with a Moveon case due to the intervention of digital technology.

Another case that was used to explain functions of facilitate strategy and tactics that are undertaken, to determine public opinion, and restructure collective actions is The Occupy Wall Street Movement (OWS). This movement was based in New York to problematize an economic inequality. Supporters of OWS utilized Blogspot, Wordpress, Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube as a main strategy to develop a collective identity. The blog posts-themed "we are the 99 percent"—a statement that represents an income disparity between 1 percent of the wealthy people and the rest in US—proliferated during this movement occurred. The contents of blog posts were about people' personal and emotional stories that lost their jobs and homes, entangled in debt, did not have opportunities, and excluded from government assistance and services. As for during a protest on the streets happened, there were clashes with authorities that caused some participants wereinjured. These incidents were recorded by other participants, then uploaded to social media. Hence, this movement gained not only more attention from various parties, but also a positive public opinion regarding its worthiness. Furthermore, a similar protest mushroomed in other states and its participants were increased.

Through this OWS case, Carty offered variations on political mediation theory of a social movement and a new social movement theory. Social movements in the past tended to need an access to

media companies in order to make public opinion worked as a signal or mediating variable. This is clearly different with a OWS case due to the intervention of digital technology. As for structure of a collective action in OWS resembles the structure that is theorized in a new social movement theory, such as decentralized and leaderless a collective action and more horizontal methods in terms of power sharing and decision making. Nevertheless, OWS had more diverse participants and a different issue that was raised rather thana new social movement theory, which commonly applied to white people, middle class, and issues regarding lifestyle and cultured life instead of economic and social or public policy.

Carty is indeed proved that the digital technology utilization become crucial in social movements in the related era, or at least, it has changed the dynamics, strategy, tactics, and structure in social movements; however, she did not offer her critical analysis on this theme. Thus, she did not reach an elaborate explanation of "why social movements that used the digital technology as a main resource can be successful or failed?". She only admitted the assumption of digital technology as a tool, so it can be used for something that consider right or wrong.

Concur with the assumption of digital technology as a tool is also quite problematic. The digital technology is not only a tool that its functions are fully determined by the authority of users (Fuchs 2013). For instance, an algorithm, features, design, or display of social media are created specifically in order to the user spend a lot of time to use and explore social media (Fuchs 2013). Even in daily life, it seems to be difficult to not make use of social media. In consequence, now, we are easily and susceptible to be exposed by hoax, hate speech, and provocation in social media that is potentially culminated into polarization, criminalization, and conflicts in the real world. Especially if an electoral season arrived, now it is easier to undertake maneuvers of political and religious populism due to social media. Surely we need preconditions or factors to make the following things happened: criticalness of digital technology utilization, digital literacy, and functionality of cyberspace as a deliberative space. These things were not explained by Carty—as parts of an elaborate explanation of "why social movements that used the digital technology as a main resource can be successful or failed?".

In spite of that, this book is worthy to be read if interested to explore the topics of a social movement, new media, or political and cultural

sociology. The arrangement of its plots and chapters makes the context and substance of this book is easier to understand. Before reached the main subject, this book explains the theories of a social movement and new media (are categorized in accord with context, substance, and trajectory), the roles of technology in various eras to promote a social change, and the capabilities of digital technology to promote a social change. Even at the end of each chapter, Carty provided questions to encourage further discussions. Carty, who was a social activist during her college days, has always motivated to know the depth layers of social activism due to a statement of her lecturer: "If you want to effect a social change, you need to be informed." Related to that, this book seems to be a gift from Carty that is more than enough for its readers to be informed.

REFERENCES

Carty, Victoria. 2018. *Social Movements and New Technology*. New York: Routledge.

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