

MISQ Archivist

Social Media Affordances or Connective Action: An Examination of Microblogging Use During the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill

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Abstract

This research questions how social media use affords new forms of organizing and collective engagement. The concept of connective action has been introduced to characterize such new forms of collective engagement in which actors coproduce and circulate content based upon an issue of mutual interest. Yet, how the use of social media actually affords connective action still needed to be investigated.

Mixed methods analyses of microblogging use during the Gulf of Mexico oil spill bring insights to this question and reveal, in particular, how multiple actors enacted emerging and interdependent roles with their distinct patterns of feature use. The findings allow us to elaborate upon the concept of connective affordances as collective level affordances actualized by actors in team interdependent roles. Connective affordances extend research on affordances as a relational concept by considering not only the relationships between technology and users but also the interdependence type among users and the effects of this interdependence onto what users can do with the technology. This study contributes to research on social media use by paying close attention to how distinct patterns of feature use enact emerging roles. Adding to IS scholarship on the collective use of technology, it considers how the patterns of feature use for emerging groups of actors are intricately and mutually related to each other.

Keywords: Connective affordances, microblogging, interdependence, roles, mixed methods, sustainability, collective use, new forms of collective engagement