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## "A Comparative Analysis of Collective Action Frames in Nosamo and the Tea Party"

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# A comparative analysis of collective action frames in Nosamo and the Tea Party

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## Abstract

Classical collective action theories assume that successful political movements must have an organization and the ability to mobilize supporters in support of a common goal. Yet the unprecedented achievements of networked political movements have led scholars to reconsider these assumptions. South Korea's Nosamo and the Tea Party Movement are unique among networked political movements in that they were aimed at electing specific political candidates. The ability of these two movements successfully to bypass party orthodoxy without a traditional organizational apparatus has bolstered optimism about participatory democracy. However, while both of these movements began as free-flowing horizontal networks, each developed a hierarchical organizational structure. We examine how the development of an organizational structure affected each group's dominant frame, comparing structures and outcomes in the two cases. In particular, we find out whether there are differences in each group's ability to affect a unified presence by examining group documents and news coverage. Our results suggest that a cohesive collective action frame is possible without formal organizations, though there may be other requirements that might obtain only under certain circumstances, somewhat weakening prospects for participatory democracy.

## Keywords

connective action, frame, organizations, Korea, Nosamo, Tea Party

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## Introduction

In 2002, something of a miracle occurred in South Korea: Roh Moo-hyun, a liberal politician born in Gyeongsang province, was elected president. Despite the deeply entrenched antipathy of liberals in Korea's Southwest province towards politicians from the Southeast province, Roh was able to cultivate a broad base of support for his presidential bid. Perhaps this feat is not as well-known as the country's economic transformation, but it was a watershed in Korean politics that, to many, signaled the demise of the maligned region-based voting pattern.

The emergence of Nosamo, a political fan club that evolved into a networked political movement, was a major contributor to Roh's success (Roh, 2002). Nosamo played a key role in turning the electoral tide during the Democratic (Korea's left-leaning party) presidential primary. Democratic Party elites opposed Roh's candidacy because they believed that liberal Western voters would be weary of Roh's Eastern roots, and they were skeptical of his ability to garner electoral support in the conservative Southeast region. The efforts of Nosamo activists helped Roh overcome intra-party opposition and secure the Democratic presidential nomination (Koh, 2002).

The burgeoning Tea Party Movement (TPM) faced a similar dilemma in the United States. It perceived the Republican Party establishment as having lost touch with the free-market ideology that had helped the party achieve political success in the 1980s and 1990s. Its solution was to seek out and support libertarian-minded candidates who faced opposition from the mainstream Republican Party establishment. Ron Paul, one such non-mainstream politician who had failed to obtain the party's backing for his presidential bid, was given a boost by the efforts of loosely organized activists and interested citizens in the run-up to the 2008 presidential election. Somewhat similar to the way Nosamo participants were able to contravene party elites in Korea, the spontaneous networked action of citizens catapulted Paul from the fringe into the national spotlight by helping him raise campaign funds, assisting in the election of pro-TPM members of congress, and increasing support for the ideas of the TPM amongst the American public (Madestam et al., 2013).

The ability of these kinds of groups to become socially prominent has led some scholars to reconsider the requisites for successful collective action. According to classical theories, collective action efforts must meet certain requirements if they are to be successful; these include an organizational apparatus, a stock of resources, and a dominant frame. Yet the internet and digital media have made new forms of collective action possible, forms which do not require hierarchical organizations or centralized leadership in order efficaciously to influence politics and the public sphere. Nosamo and the TPM are unique in that they employed a mix of technology and grassroots activism to bypass elite-favored candidates in favor of non-mainstream candidates.

In this article, we look for similarities between the abilities of Nosamo and the TPM to maintain a consistent collective action frame during their earlier networked periods, as well as changes in the collective action frame that occurred after they came under the influence of formal organizations. By doing so we hope to elucidate the potentialities of connective action and the way contextual variables might condition movement outcomes. We begin with a brief historical comparison of Nosamo and the TPM, followed by an overview of the contemporary debate on collective action. The main analysis consists of a computer-assisted text analysis in which we identify collective action frames in the networked and organized periods of each group. We assess and compare the impact of organization on each movement's collective action frame, and then derive from this comparison more general implications about social movements.

Our findings support the view that networked movements can indeed give rise to a consistent collective action frame. The primary evidence of this is our discovery of a coherent frame in the

communications of Nosamo participants. However, the eventual dissolution of this frame casts doubt on the ability of connective action-based movements to sustain dominant frames in the long run. The reach of our analysis is short, the present study being largely exploratory in nature. Nevertheless, that we were able to discover a coherent collective action frame in the spontaneous communications of Nosamo participants may be indicative of a more general pattern of social mobilization.

## **Nosamo and the TPM: A brief comparative history**

Nosamo, which is a transliterated Korean acronym meaning ‘Group for people who love Roh Moo-hyun’, began as an ostensibly non-political fan site for Roh Moo-hyun (Koh, 2002: 18). After Roh failed to win a legislative seat in his home province, his supporters began to use the site as a forum to express their common sympathies and frustrations about regionalism and Roh’s ignominious defeat in the general election of 2000 (Koh, 2002: 48).

According to Koh (2002), the social bonds developed through online interaction became the basis for offline political action in support of Roh’s bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2001. After intense online deliberation, Nosamo members unanimously decided to engage in offline political action in support of Roh. The primary obstacle to his election was a powerful group of Democratic Party elites who favored mainstream candidate Yi In-jae. In order to overcome the influence of party elites, Nosamo members held pro-Roh rallies in each of Korea’s major provinces, and began a campaign that encouraged Nosamo members to write letters to citizens, urging them to join the party and support Roh. The result was an impressive victory in the Southwest Province that turned the tide of the primary election in Roh’s favor, leading to his successful bid for the Democratic presidential nomination.

After the primary election, however, it became clear that Nosamo’s loose, horizontal, networked style of action was not sufficient for dealing with the realities of a full-fledged political campaign. Nosamo had been operating without a central leadership or formal organization, such that all decisions were made by unanimous or near unanimous online vote. But the presidential campaign began to create divisions within the movement regarding its political direction, making unanimous decisions impossible (Jenkins, 2014: 23). Nosamo’s inertia coincided with a sudden drop in Roh’s popularity, resulting in the departure of many Nosamo members from the group. In order to correct this collective action failure, the remaining members formed a formal decision-making body and an administrative apparatus to govern the group’s actions. The quintessential tactic during this period was the ‘hope pig’ campaign, wherein Nosamo distributed small plastic piggy banks and urged citizens to fill them with coins that would be collected and used to fund Nosamo’s activities (Han and Kim, 2012).

Analogous to Nosamo’s ‘hope pigs’ were the ‘money bombs’ that provided the financial boost that propelled Ron Paul into the national conversation about the presidential election of 2008. Just as supporters of Roh used Nosamo to bypass the liberal party elite, Paul’s supporters circumvented the Republican Party and its donors by amassing a large number of small-sum donations (Vogel, 2007). The December 16th money bomb event was timed to coincide with the 234th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party, and it attracted more than 20,000 new donors, many of whom had no previous political experience. Also, similar to the way Nosamo members used nosamo.org to exchange ideas and organize political events, members of what we have termed the ‘networked’ Tea Party used meetup.com to do the same. Maltsev and Skaskiw (2013) describe early TPM activism as the following: ‘Using the networking website meetup.com ... Paul’s supporters

formed local clubs which worked to promote Paul and his campaign . . . with no direction from his campaign' (p. 26).

In other words, while many commentators associate the TPM with corporate-backed national organizations, the early TPM was to a large extent a genuine grassroots movement that received direction neither from Paul's campaign nor from the steering committee of a central Tea Party organization (Parker and Barreto, 2013). Rather, it was a flurry of political activity inspired by the political ideals associated with Paul.

Like Nosamo, the TPM also went through an organizational transformation, though the kind of organizational scheme the TPM developed differed greatly from that of Nosamo. The key impetus to the development of large, centralized national TPM organizations was the appearance of Rick Santelli on CNBC in February of 2009 (Rosenthal, 2009). Santelli criticized the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and urged citizens to organize a 'tea party in July'. Soon after, large national groups like the Tea Party Express, Tea Party Nation, and the Tea Party Patriots began to gain national prominence, seizing the momentum created by Santelli's speech.

In contrast to the highly centralized leadership that emerged in Nosamo, there is no one dominant national organization or steering committee that directs the activities of the TPM. Rather, each national group has its own leadership, organizational structure, and local affiliates. The national groups sometimes cooperate, as they did during the 2009 march on Washington, but they are largely independent organizations with distinct and sometimes conflicting political objectives. For example, Freedom Works is largely dedicated to issues related to taxes and the size of the Federal government, whereas the 1776 Tea Party's platform includes points on a wide range of issues, from taxes to immigration (Burghart and Ziskind, 2010: 23).

There are also significant differences between the substantive outcomes associated with the two groups. Although the campaign efforts of both groups resulted in the election of particular politicians—Roh Moo-hyun for Nosamo, and various pro-TPM candidates in the congressional elections of 2010—the TPM clearly had more long-term success in creating something resembling a national movement. For example, Madestam et al. (2013) point out that TPM activism not only increased support for the TPM's ideas amongst the American public, but also increased the likelihood of future activism (p. 1657). Recent estimates of TPM membership show an increase from 2014 to 2015 (Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, 2015).

By contrast, only the vestiges of Nosamo remain today. This might seem to imply that Nosamo was merely a vehicle for Roh's election, and that once this was accomplished there was no need for the group to exist. Yet this view overlooks the fact that offshoots of Nosamo remain active. For example, several groups associated with Nosamo have accreted into the Roh Moo-hyun Foundation (Roh Moo-hyun Jaedan), a group which continues to hold information sessions, rallies, and other activities in support of the ideals associated with former President Roh. Kim Sang-ho, director of operations of this group, stated the following: 'Korean political parties are very weak. Though the Democratic Party [Minju Dang] is lacking in certain respects, we think that we should go in solidarity with it. We are trying to tow it' (Kim Sang-ho, 2013, Jenkins, 2014).

This suggests that Nosamo's legacy lies more in the fact that it has highlighted the need for more substantial connections between political parties and their supporters, and that citizen operated groups, such as the Roh Moo-hyun foundation, can help in this regard. In contrast to the Tea Party which has specific ideological goals that often conflict with those of the Republican party establishment, the descendants of Nosamo see themselves as pursuing an institutional function, rather than a purely ideological one.

In sum, Nosamo and the TPM are two movements that are very different in terms of ideology and in the way they fit into the politics of their respective countries, but they nevertheless share certain key features that make them an interesting subject of comparison. In particular, we might be interested to examine the extent to which spontaneous collective action gave rise to these two groups, and how they changed as a result of group dynamics and political context. Similarities between the two cases might point to broader patterns of collective action in the current era of digital media. In the next section we examine theories that will assist in this analysis.

### *Collective action and the rise of connective action*

Scholars of collective action have posited a number of requirements that political movements must meet if they are to be successful. To take a well-known example, Olson (1965) argues that the mere presence of shared interests among individuals is not a sufficient condition for collective action; in order to induce people to join in large scale collective action they must either be offered an incentive or be threatened with punishment. This implies that the collective action efforts must include some kind of governing body capable of offering such incentives and meting out punishment for non-participation. In other words, the organization must come prior to individual participation.

Social movement scholars deviate somewhat from the classical view, but they too see organization as a pre-requisite for collective action. McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996: 4) argue that political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and collective action frames are critical to the success of social movements. That is, a social movement is not simply a formless mob that storms the streets; it has organization and a coherent message, and its ability to influence the public sphere and to effect political change is dependent upon openings in the political opportunity structure (Meyer, 2004). This means that there must be some kind of vanguard capable of constructing a collective action frame and gathering the resources required to mobilize potential supporters.

One caveat is the possibility that the emergence of a master frame might enable ‘a number of movements clustered together’ to engage in collective action despite the absence of a favorable opportunity structure (Benford, 2013: 1). For example, Carroll and Ratner (1996) provide evidence that the use of a common master frame correlates positively with ‘cross movement networking’, because a master frame is broad enough both to provide a common understanding of a given political situation and to allow each group sufficient leeway to adapt the frame to its unique agenda (p. 611). Here too, then, social movement organizations have been pre-supposed.

However, the emerging ubiquity of the internet and digital media has caused scholars to reconsider the traditional requirements and parameters of collective action. By dramatically lowering the cost of communication, digital media allow people to engage in collective action on their own terms, rather than according to the direction of an organizational body. Bimber et al. (2012) argue that the internet has made possible a wide range of participation styles, such that members of traditional interest groups no longer need to rely on a central organization. They can instead use the internet to contact other members and organize group activities on their own. Moreover, organizations that lack most of the structural features of traditional interest groups, such as MoveOn, allow members to interact and engage in ways that may have been difficult or impossible in a non-digital media environment.

Bennett and Segerberg (2013) go even further, arguing that the contemporary digital media environment has made possible an entirely novel pattern of collective action that they call ‘connective action’. The authors posit that connective action is not just a way to solve the free-rider

problem. Rather, it is an alternative logic of group action rooted in the personalization of self-expression fostered by digital media. Connective action makes it possible for citizens to organize without organizations, such that it is no longer necessary to rely on the leadership of a centralized governing body or interest group headquarters in order to achieve movement objectives. The appearance of successful networked movements, then, would seem to strengthen the ability of citizens to engage in the kind of direct political participation described above.

Both collective action theory and connective action seem to concede that collective action frames are necessary for successful group mobilization. A collective action frame is an idea, statement, or word that provides a movement with a way to interpret the world. According to Benford and Snow (2000), it functions by simplifying and condensing aspects of the 'world out there' in ways that are 'intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists' (p. 614). Traditional collective action theories suggest that frames are a necessary part of organizing because they lend movements a minimum amount of ideological coherence, and they motivate people to action by specifying the source of their troubles (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992). Without an organizational body to promulgate a coherent interpretative framework and sanction deviations from this framework, individuals or sub-groups within the movement would invent mutually conflicting slogans and frameworks.

Proponents of connective action, on the other hand, point to Occupy Wall Street and Los Indignados as examples of collective action that emerged from spontaneous and individualized participation, not as part of the design of an organizational body with a parochial set of concerns. In Occupy, people gathered under the 'we are the 99 percent' frame, but individuals adapted and personalized that frame without any interference from a governing body intent on maintaining a coherent image and message (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). This is because frames like 'We are the 99 percent' are broad enough to allow multiple interpretations while providing the movement with a minimal degree of ideological coherence. While each sub-group may have its own story-telling devices, the movement as a whole is united under a single dominant frame, not a pastiche of fragmented frames as traditional theory might lead us to expect.

## **Research question and method**

While they share a few key similarities, Nosamo and the TPM are very different in terms of their organizational structure, ideology, and the overall cultural and political context in which they are situated. Accordingly, we employ a most different systems design (MDS), the logic being that, if a given relationship between variables is discovered in drastically different cases, then it is plausible that the relationship is robust (Peters, 1998). A comparison of Nosamo and the TPM, then, may help us understand the factors that affect the ability of networked movements to construct collective action frames. Does a consistent frame emerge prior to the development of an organization, or are there conflicting and competing frames within the same movement? How does the development of an organizational structure affect each movement's frame? What do the different outcomes suggest about the way contextual factors influence the formation and maintenance of collective action frames?

Traditional movement theory might lead us to expect the absence of a clear collective action frame during the early stages of a networked movement, because without a true central organization there is nothing to prevent the emergence of multiple competing frames. This is in contrast to the latter stages of a movement, which should be characterized by a more coherent frame, because the central organization will have sanctioned or excised those using deviant frames. On the other

hand, the logic of connective action suggests that a movement frame will be present during both stages, and that it will reflect the extent of solidarity among participants. We expect solidarity to be highest during the initial phase of a movement, but once the novelty of the movement diminishes we expect an accompanying decrease in solidarity. Thus, we hypothesize that the initial frame will be more consistent with participant sentiment, whereas the latter will reflect the purposes of the formal organization. These hypotheses are summarized below.

**H1:** A dominant frame will be present in the organization-less phase of both groups.

**H1a:** This dominant frame will reflect the popular sentiment that is underlying the movement.

**H2:** A dominant frame will be present during the organized phase of both groups.

**H2a:** This dominant frame will reflect the interests and objectives of the organization, and will be qualitatively different from the frame present during the organization-less phase.

### *Analytical method*

In the initial stages of each movement there is no organizational apparatus producing a collective action frame, so we look at individual content produced by participants in order to see if they are discussing the group in the same way. In both cases the most readily available kind of content is posts on group discussion boards. Accordingly, we operationalize ‘frame’ as the most frequently appearing words in a corpus along with highly correlated words. The rationale for this is that, in contrast to news briefs issued by a central organization, member posts in a horizontal network are not centrally edited in any systematic manner. This means that a full content analysis of each post may introduce an unwieldy amount of variance. By contrast, we might expect a post’s title and first sentence to encapsulate its content, because the latter is the first piece of information that a reader is exposed to, and it is where the overriding theme of the article is established. We discover these frames for the networked and organization-based phases of each group by conducting a text analysis of group documents and news articles. This consists of using a text mining software package to remove stop words and punctuation from data, then finding high frequency words along with their correlates, that is, words that appear together with high frequency words. We verify each frame by looking for references to it in unreconstructed sentences from the data, as well as contextual evidence. Finally, we construct word clouds in order to provide a visual interpretation of the differences between frames in the two phases of each movement.

### *Data*

We draw our textual data from a variety of sources, including official group documents like press releases, member posts on the group message boards, as well as newspaper articles written about the group. We include the latter because they provide some indication of how the group was perceived by those outside the movement. We expect this perception to be the result of varying influences from within the movement, so that the news articles will act as a balance to documents pulled from movement websites, because the latter are more thematically consistent. In other words, there may be individuals within the group using drastically different frames not captured by group sources. We avoid overestimating the coherence of the group collective action frame by adding news articles to the stock of data. Examples of data are shown in Table 1.



**Table 1.** Example data for TPM.

New York Times	'Reporter Says Outburst Was Spontaneous'	'Rick Santelli, the CNBC reporter whose on-air suggestion of a "Chicago Tea Party" to ... Monday.'
FreedomWorks	'Top Ten Ways the Obama Budget Wastes Taxpayer Money'	'The president's fiscal year 2010 budget ... released on Feb'

We use media.nosamo.org to collect user-generated content on Nosamo. Overall, we collected 136 members' comments; 14 in 2000, 16 in 2001, 39 in 2002, 27 in 2003, 27 in 2004, and 13 in 2005. As the number of Nosamo members increased following the Democratic presidential primary and Presidential election, so did the amount of user-generated content, such that the highest amount of data is available for the middle period of Nosamo (Yun and Chang, 2007). Nosamo.org continued to function throughout the presidential campaign, but sufficient user-generated content was not available for two periods: prior to 2000, and from 2005 onwards. For these two periods group data was supplemented with news articles which were drawn from a variety of newspapers, such as Seoul Newspaper, SBS, and OhMyNews. While this content is not directly created by Nosamo members themselves, it includes interviews with Nosamo members and other content produced by Nosamo, thus it should provide a fair indication of group frame during those years.

For the Tea Party Movement we drew upon three main data sources: a national newspaper with a liberal ideology (*The New York Times*), a national libertarian organization that has an affiliated Tea Party branch (FreedomWorks), and a decentralized online TPM blogging forum (Tea Party Patriots). In total, we collected 173 entries consisting of one major story or blog post for every month from December 2007 (Ron Paul's first 'money bomb') to December 2012, with the exception of the Tea Party Patriots whose forums did not become active until March 2009. We searched for terms such as 'Tea Party,' 'Ron Paul,' and 'Libertarian' using the *New York Times*' Digital Archive. We chose the most commented-upon blog post for each month on the Tea Party Patriot site. In order to provide consistency we only used blog posts or press releases from FreedomWorks that were written by Matt Kibbe, its CEO and co-founder. For example, our database consisted of three entries for March 2009. These are shown in the table below.

## Results

The results of the text analysis are shown in Table 2. The column labeled 'frequent terms' displays the most frequently occurring words for the networked and organization-based periods of each group.<sup>1</sup> Next to each frequently appearing word is the lower limit of the frequency with which it appeared (i.e. '>30' indicates that the word appeared at least 30 times). The correlated terms column displays words that appeared together with the most frequent terms. The degree of correlation is shown in parentheses: '0' indicates no correlation and '1' indicates perfect correlation.

'Regionalism' is the most frequent word in the networked Nosamo data set. Given the high correlations with the words 'overcome' and 'ending', we characterize the collective action frame of networked Nosamo as 'end regionalism'. That is, networked Nosamo framed the presidential election in terms of ending Korea's regional voting pattern, because it was believed to be at the root of distortions in the country's party system. Perhaps chief among these perceived distortions was Roh's failure to win a legislative seat in his home province in the general election in 2000, as well as the dominance of the party bosses, who some writers have characterized as a 'political nobility' because their power is rooted in the adherence of the body politic to region-based voting (Son,

**Table 2.** Frequent words and correlated words.

<b>Networked Nosamo</b> (2000–June 2002)		<b>Organization-based Nosamo</b> (June 2002–2005)	
<b>Frequent Terms</b>	<b>Correlated Terms</b>	<b>Frequent Terms</b>	<b>Correlated Terms</b>
Regionalism (>30)	Overcome (0.45) Ending (0.41)	Election (>20)	Committee (0.44) Excessively (0.44) Law (0.39)
Chosun (>25)	Pro-Japanese (0.42) Boycott (0.40)	Nosamo (>20)	Position (0.41) 1st (0.29) Nohaegyeong (0.29)

2011: 729). The following pair of quotes drawn from our data set illustrates the logic of the ‘end regionalism’ frame:

Netizens felt sorry for Roh’s defeat due to regionalism. There is no disagreement on the problem of regionalism among the political elites and the public. We need alternative actions to overcome it.

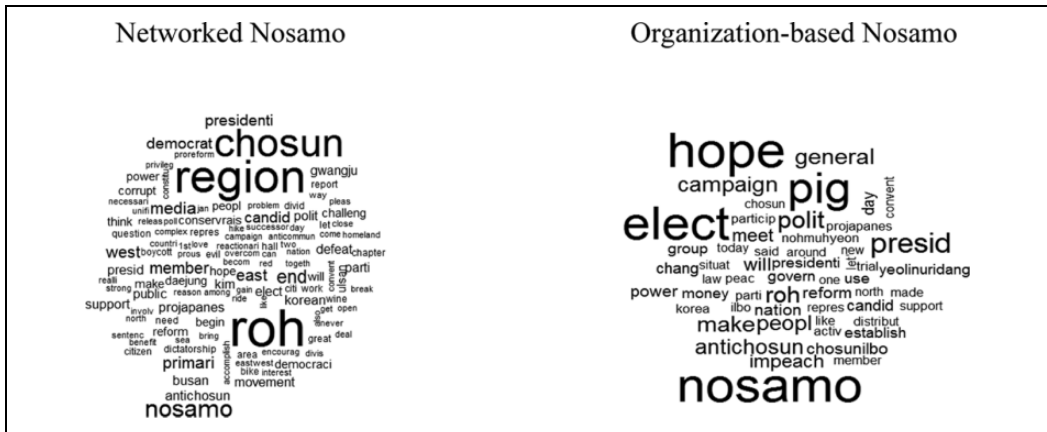
I think Representative Roh has a strong potential to break regionalism. He is the most electable presidential candidate.

Thus, the ‘end regionalism’ frame can potentially perform all of the functions that theorists of collective action and social movements require a collective action frame to perform: it identifies regionalism as the source of the problem (diagnostic), it suggests the election of Roh as the solution (prognostic), and it motivates people by suggesting participation in Nosamo as a way to make tangible progress towards this goal (motivational). These findings support hypotheses H1 and H1a, insofar as the ‘end regionalism’ frame constitutes a dominant frame and that it reflects the underlying popular sentiment regarding regionalism.

The second most frequent term during the Nosamo period is ‘Chosun’, which refers to the Chosun Ilbo, Korea’s foremost conservative newspaper company. The frequent appearance of this term can be attributed to the newspaper’s frequent polemical attacks on Roh Moo-hyun and Nosamo. It is unlikely that it constitutes a distinct collective action frame.

Overall, it is clear that the substantive focus of the group’s collective action frame veered away from regionalism and towards institutional politics during its organization-based phase, supporting hypothesis H2. While it is difficult to identify a single collective action frame, the prominence of the word ‘election’ suggests that Nosamo focused on the practical aspects of winning an election, partially supporting hypothesis H2a. Also, as the word cloud below suggests, the frequent appearance of the phrase ‘hope pig’ strengthens the interpretation of organized Nosamo as a ‘campaign machine’, because the ‘hope pigs’ were Nosamo’s primary means of fund raising. The word clouds in Figure 1 below make apparent the difference between the ‘end regionalism’ frame of networked Nosamo and what we call the ‘participation’ frame of organized Nosamo.

The results for the TPM do not suggest an easily interpretable collective action frame for either of the periods. However, they do generally follow a pattern that is similar to that which we discovered in Nosamo, in that the conversational themes move from issue- or ideology-centered themes to a more generic participatory theme, as suggested by the absence of

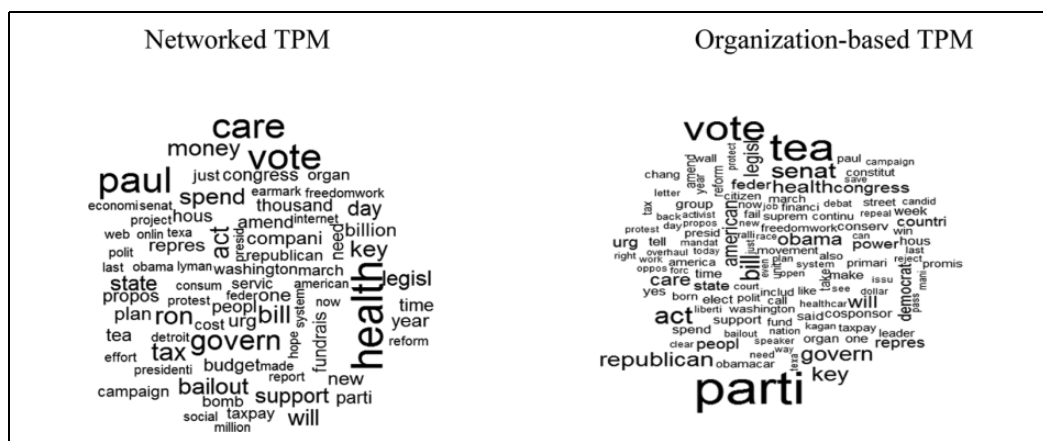


**Figure 1.** Networked Nosamo vs. organization-based Nosamo.

mentions of broad ideological issues in the organized TPM data; this weakly supports hypotheses H1 and H1a. In the first instance, networked TPM appears to have framed the political debate largely in terms of a reaction to the two cornerstone policies of the early Obama administration: the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (healthcare reform) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment act, otherwise known by its detractors as the ‘bailout’. There is an almost perfect correlation in the 2007 to 2009 data between the phrases ‘care’ and ‘health’ giving credence to the belief that references to healthcare dominated the sources that we used. Other correlated terms included ‘care’ and ‘system’; ‘care’ and ‘socialized’; ‘vote’ and ‘urge’; ‘vote and bailout’; and ‘Paul’ and ‘Lyman.’ These pairings can also be understood in the context of the data sources themselves; though Ron Paul’s name was often linked in *The New York Times* with that of Trevor Lyman, who orchestrated the Boston Tea Party-related ‘money bombs’ as fundraisers for Paul, Matt Kibbe’s personal focus in the same three-year window was constantly and consistently urging members of the House and Senate to vote against the bailout and healthcare reform.

The shift in the nature of the TPM—from networked to organized—engendered a similar shift in media coverage as well as the frames of the movement itself. An examination of the second half of Table 3 reveals as much; references to ‘healthcare’ and ‘bailout’ which had so dominated all three data sources from December 2007 to April 2009 faded considerably from mid-2009 to December 2012. Rather, the dominant term was again ‘vote,’ but this time, as the Tea Party Movement rapidly expanded to the national political arena, the correlated words were ‘vote’ and ‘massive’; ‘vote and ‘intrusion’; ‘act’ and ‘cosponsor’; and ‘act’ and ‘3826’ (a reference to H.R. 3826 on energy reform). Another remarkable change between the networked and organized TPM was a decline in identification with the Republican Party; whereas the first period saw a healthy correlation between Paul’s name and the ‘republican’ label, that dropped off in the second phase of the movement as Ron Paul faded as a presidential candidate and darling of the movement, and was instead replaced with a host of other figures who were all linked to the TPM, including Senator Ted Cruz, Representative Michele Bachmann, and others. This shift is further illustrated by the decrease in size of the word ‘Paul’ in the organization-based TPM word cloud shown in Figure 2.

Networked TPM (2007 – April 2009)		Organization-based TPM (May 2009–2012)	
Frequent Terms	Correlated Terms	Frequent Terms	Correlated Terms
Care	health 0.96 system 0.80 socialized 0.62 battle 0.60	Act	cosponsor 0.43 3826 0.38 reins 0.38 avoid 0.37
Vote	key 0.86 urge 0.71 American 0.43 bailout 0.43	Vote	key 0.65 massive 0.51 yes 0.43 intrusion 0.42
Paul	Lyman 0.58 web 0.58 republican 0.50	Party	democratic 0.24 ideals 0.22 influencing 0.22



## Discussion

Our results offer tentative support for the views of connective action theorists. Networked Nosamo had neither the resources, leadership, nor organization that classical collective action theories argue is required for collective action, yet it displayed a highly consistent collective action frame. There is a strong possibility that the cohesiveness of the ‘end regionalism’ frame of networked Nosamo is at least in part due to the degree to which it resonated a key subset of voters, the so-called ‘386’ generation, which refers to the subsection of voters that had participated in Korea’s democratization movement but whose hopes for democracy had been dashed by regionalism (Jenkins, 2014: 20). These citizens had witnessed the cooptation of regional divisions by ambitious politicians, making them uniquely receptive to this frame.

thus relatively easy to mobilize in support of Roh regardless of previous ideological or political commitments.

In contrast, there does not seem to have been a single overriding issue that united TPM participants under a common banner. The influence of national organizations notwithstanding, the TPM more or less remained a 'loose confederation of leaders, activists, and sympathizers' that acted in support of a constellation of conservative principles (Parker and Barreto, 2013: 1). Some participants joined the movement because of specific issues like healthcare reform legislation, while others joined in order to further broader ideological commitments. It may be the case that, without a cohort of similarly situated individuals, the tea party failed to produce a single collective action frame analogous to Nosamo's 'end regionalism' frame. It could be that, because legislative candidates in the United States are also chosen through primary elections, the sort of candidates produced by the TPM represented a kind of compromise between the narrower political tendencies of the local TPM affiliates and the broader political umbrella of the national groups. Accordingly, we might view the different tea party groups as aggregators of the various ideological tendencies of the wider movement. This would explain the heterogeneity of our data sample, as the TPM message boards are available to local affiliates as well as national group members. This might also help to explain why the tea party has achieved more success in legislative elections than in the presidential elections. That is, whereas it failed to unite libertarian voters behind a single presidential candidate, as Nosamo succeeded in doing, local TPM groups were able to put pressure on conservative legislators by threatening them with electoral defeat in local primaries.

Accordingly, although the results of the analysis generally support the idea that networked groups can produce a coherent collective action frame, the feasibility of such groups as alternatives to parties and organizations in general appears to be highly dependent on institutions and context. Both groups managed to achieve political leverage by influencing primary elections; by appealing to commonly held grievances about mainstream politicians, Nosamo and the Tea Party were able to coax voters into supporting candidates who would otherwise have been dismissed as unelectable. However, it is unclear whether connective action of this type would have a similar effect in closed-list PR systems, where party elites have a much heavier hand in candidate selection. It seems unlikely that outside lobbying by grassroots political organizations would affect the decisions of party elite, all the more so because it may be unlikely that the results of the general election could be swayed by the presence or absence of particular candidates on the party slate. On the other hand, parties in Western countries have been opening up candidate selection to increasingly wider swaths of voters (Bille, 2001). If this trend continues we may witness further instances of successful large-scale connective action that can be associated with clearly identifiable political outcomes.

There is also the issue of context. There are myriad connective action-based political groups operating throughout the world, but only a tiny minority of them is able to achieve the degree of coherence and influence that Nosamo and the TPM have achieved. As mentioned above, Nosamo's success was at least in part due to the presence of a large public with shared experiences that made them uniquely receptive to a specific collective action frame. This is not to say that the presence of a special generation or community of experience is a pre-requisite for the spontaneous production of a coherent collective action frame or for the success of grassroots movements more generally. We only point out that it is rare for the same generation to experience democratization, the spread of the internet, and the rise of a nation from poverty to one of the world's leading economies.

Finally, if it is their character as horizontal networks that make them fundamentally distinct from other organizations and institutions, then our analysis casts some doubt on the long-term

viability of organization-less connective action. Master frames are supposed to serve the purpose of uniting group participants behind a common cause, and in both cases we found some evidence for the presence of such a frame. But we also know that each group transitioned out of this frame and came to rely on a formal organization. For example, the 'end regionalism' frame helped unite members of Nosamo only up until the complex nature of politics created centrifugal pressures within the group, after which point formal organization became necessary for its survival; this may be at the heart of the shift in its dominant frame. As Nosamo came to rely more on its administrative apparatus for organizing group activity, it became less necessary to maintain a consistent narrative, hence mentions of regionalism decreased, as did opportunities for participants to use the frame in a collectively meaningful and individually fulfilling manner. This does not mean that the organization became unable to affect political outcomes, but the character of the latter group and its relationship with the public was fundamentally different from that of the group's organization-less phase. Its ties to the Liberal Party had become stronger and more overt, and it took on the character of a traditional interest group.

As is well known, a similar fate befell the TPM. With its ties to the Koch brothers and the Republican Party elites, many came to view it as a tool of the Republican Party, though some within the establishment, most notably Karl Rove, have come to oppose the TPM and its congressional contingent (Zeleny, 2013). The organization-less phase of the TPM was short, and though we were unable to find strong evidence of an accompanying shift in its dominant frame, the change in the organization's character is well-documented.

## Conclusion

By maintaining a consistent collective action frame, networked movements can effectively influence the public sphere and indirectly affect the governing process and laws that are shaped by it. Furthermore, connective action also provides a means for private citizens to influence or even bypass official party organizations. As we can see in the case of the TPM and Nosamo, insofar as private citizens are able to use social networking services to rally around a given political cause, and where public support can be used to garner financial support, as in the tea party money bombs or Nosamo hope pigs, connective action can drastically alter the outcome of the candidate selection process of political parties.

Yet there are still many reasons to doubt the capacity of such movements to perform this function, or, rather, to perform it in the same capacity as traditional interest groups or social movements. For example, the pattern of beginning as a loose, horizontal, or networked movement and transforming into an organization (or at least a more organized form of the movement) is not unique to these two groups. A similar pattern emerged in Occupy Wall Street, for example, which began to develop steering committees and factions as movement participants struggled to establish a plan of political action. In other words, we may be unable to look to connective action as a genuine alternative to existing institutional channels, because connective action-based political movements seem to be ephemeral, or perhaps more accurately, it is possible that they are simple transitory phases on the way to becoming hierarchical organizations. This in and of itself should not necessarily be disappointing to proponents of participatory democracy.

Perhaps we can conceive of this divide as a kind of natural division of labor, wherein networked movements steer the conversation in the public sphere towards an important issue, and organizations affiliated with or resulting from the movement go on to do the 'dirty work' of campaigning and raising money for specific electoral races or bills. But as we saw in the transition from

networked Nosamo to organized Nosamo, there may be something critical lost in the transition from networked to organization-based activity; individual input on group agenda. Thus, the potential for ordinary participants to influence the governing process, even at this removed stage, is limited. Moreover, it is still not clear what additional contextual variables are required in order for connective action to become a viable and qualitatively unique alternative to existing modes of participation and the party machinery.

### *Limitations of the present study and thoughts for future research*

The external validity of our results is limited because both of the groups examined developed formal organizations. Thus, the results may not apply to decentralized network type groups that remain decentralized, because there may have been organizational dynamics present in these two that are not present in other organizations. For example, it is possible that a latent organization or hierarchical participation structure was present in these two groups, and that this is what made a unified frame possible. If so, then we would not expect this to occur in groups that lack such a latent structure. Although the task of proposing a general theory or mechanism that explains the ability of connective action to generate a unified frame is out of the scope of the present study, and, indeed, difficult to infer from the small sample analyzed here, we feel that this is an important question for future research.

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### **Note**

1. Although 'organized' and 'organization-based' refer to different kinds of group structures, we use them here interchangeably.

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