Dynamics of Cross-Border Trade Union Alliances. The Case of UNI Network@Quebecor World

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I. Quebecor World Inc.

- The history of Quebecor World Inc. (QWI) since the early 1980's has been a steady growth which took place through:
  - an aggressive strategy of acquisitions
  - a strategic expansions in various international markets

- This growth has shown clear signs of decline in the early 2000's. To find a way out of this situation, Quebecor World management has adopted a program involving:
  - a strategy of cost reduction and disposing of facilities which are not part of its core business
  - the establishment of a retooling program
  - the closing of the less productive plants.

Quebecor World Inc. in 2007

Quebecor Inc. (2007)

Media Pole   *Industrial Pole*

Quebecor Media Inc.   **Quebecor World Inc.**

Includes all company's activities related to the fields of telecommunications, newspapers, publishings, TV and cable services

A subsidary of Quebecor Inc. 28,000 workers in 108 printing facilities in 15 countries (North America, Europe and Latin America)

2008: QWI filed for protection under

USA and Canada bankruptcy laws. (European assets sold to Hombergh/De Pundert in 2008; North American assets sold to Quad Graphics in 2009)

II. The "UNI Network@Quebecor World" in action (2000-2007)

- Trade unions response to restructuring: In 2000, first international meeting of QWI trade unions throughout the world, at the initiative of UNI

- Formalization of a trade unions working group called *"UNI Network @ Quebecor World" in 2000*

- Goals and targets: organizing new members at national levels; opening of a new space of negotiation with company officials at the international level

- 2005: Launch of the negotiation process for an IFA

The "UNI Network@Quebecor World" in action (2000-2007)

- The "*UNI Network@Quebecor World*" international campaign: 5 poles of strategic action:
  - Solidarity actions such as "global solidarity days", and unionization campaigns in the USA and South America (neutrality agreement with Teamsters in 2004 in USA)
  - Organization of a public awareness campaign and various media events under the coordination of UNI (Canada, USA)
  - Targeting of major Quebecor World clients to inform them on anti-union practices of the company (Europe, USA)
  - Legal procedures against QWI for anti-union practices and health and safety issues (USA, Latin America)
  - Mobilization of the Quebecor World EWC to support UNI Network demands for a global labour standards agreement

The "UNI Network@Quebecor World" in action (2000-2007)

- ## Step 1: The establishment of the first contacts between network's members

  - UNI Network @Quebecor World regular meetings began in 2000; main initial focus on organizing and basic rights campaigns in the USA and in Latin America

- ## Step 2: Organizing of a mobilization campaign

  - December 2003: *Global QuebecorWorld Solidarity Conference*, in Memphis, where more than 120 trade union delegates from 14 different countries came together and made the decision to increase pressure on the company worldwide for the recognition of labour basic rights

The "UNI Network@Quebecor World" in action (2000-2007)

- Step 3: Opening of IFA negotiation process
  - Contact with the company's management in early 2003 to engage in the negotiation of an IFA; two years later, QWI's management agreed to meet with UNI-Network representatives
  - Tentative agreement between the parties reached at the bargaining table in June 2005; instead of submitting the agreement to its Board of Directors, QWI's negotiators changed their strategy and asked for modifications, mainly about its legal status

- Step 4: Ratification of an IFA
  - New talks finally led to the signature in May 2007 of the 'Joint Statement on the Respect and Promotion of International Labour Standards' by QWI and UNI representatives

III. CROSS-BORDER TRADE UNION ALLIANCES AS SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Social networks theory : a framework to study the construction of collective action within the UNI@Quebecor World trade unions alliance

- Structural autonomy and centrality: main concepts to analyse the positions of social actors in a network
  - Structural autonomy: capacity of an actor to establish relations with other network's actors and voice its expectations without intermediaries
  - Centrality : position of influence (leadership) of an actor in shaping the agenda and orientating the collective action of a network

Region	Country	Number of plants	Main Trade Unions (in 2006)
North America	Canada	18 (14 unionized)	Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP)
	USA	62 (23 unionized)	Graphic Communications Conference/ International Brotherhood of Teamsters (GCC-IBT)
Europe	England	1	AMICUS
	Austria	1	Gewerkschaft, Druck, Journalismus, Papier (GPA-DJP)
	Belgium	1	1. CSC Bâtiment et industrie (CSC) 2. Syndicat des Employés, Techniciens et Cadres (SETCA-FGTB)
	Finland	1	Viestintäalan Ammattiliitto ry (SAK)
	France	9	Fédération des travailleurs des industries du livre, du papier et de la communication (FILPAC-CGT)
	Sweden	2	Grafiska Facföbundet Mediafacket (Grafiska-LO)
	Spain	5	1. Federación sectorial estatal - Unión General de Trabajadores (FES-UGT) 2. Federación de Comunicación y Transporte (CC.OO.)
Latin America	Argentina	1	Non Unionized plant
	Brazil	2	1. Sindicato dos Trabalhadores nas indústrias Graficas do Estado de Saõ Paulo (SINDGRAF) 2. Sindicato dos Trabalhadores nas Industrias Graficas do Estado de Pernambuco (SINDGRAF)
	Chile	1	Sindicato no. 1 de trabajadores Quebecor World - Confederación Nacional Gráfica (CONAGRA)
	Colombia	1	Non Unionized plant
	Mexico	2	1. Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores de Artes Gráficas (SITAG) 2. Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de Gráficos Monte Albán (SUTGMA)
	Peru	1	Federación Gráfica del Perú (FGP)

Positions of national trade unions within the UNI Network@QuebecorWorld

Peripherical actors : trade unions from Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Finland, Mexico and Peru

- Often isolated from collective actions, they are not part of an influent subgroup within the coalition

- Access to strategic information and central actors through other network's members, but almost never play the role of intermediary

- Irregular and instrumental participation to the network meetings and exchanges; limited voice of their expectations

- Limited structural autonomy: main contacts in the network are UNI representatives or regional trade union leaders

Positions of national trade unions within the UNI@QuebecorWorld Network

Intermediate actors : trade union representatives from Chile, England, Spain and Sweden

- These trade union representatives have direct relations with a majority of members of the network and are close to the centres of decision within the coalition
- They have influence theough central actors on the trade union alliance's decisions and strategic orientations
- They can obtain information on their own and voice their opinions and expectations to the network's leaders
- Chilean representatives are leaders of the Latin american «subgroup»; representatives from England and Sweden are members of the steering committee

Positions of national trade unions within the UNI@QuebecorWorld Network

Central actors: Trade unions representatives from Canada, France, USA and UNI officials

- These representatives are members of the network's steering committee, and hold key positions of decision
- They have direct links to almost all representatives within the network; their leadership is recognized by all members
- Trade union representatives from Canada and USA are the main coordinators of the network (President is Canadian)
- UNI officials bring technical support to the network's activities and have the strongest ties within the network
- French trade union representatives (FILPAC-CGT)) act as regional leaders for «European subgroup» and play a central role in the Quebecor World European Committee

IV. Power resources and positions of social actors within UNI Network@Quebecor World

- **Main power resources within *UNI Network @Quebecor World*:**
- Total members represented by national trade unions (members are mainly from the USA and Canada)
- Regular contact and access to QWI's high direction (mainly UNI and CEPW officials)
- Human, financial, and organizational investments in the network's activities
- Political skills: capacity of key actors to articulate unifying goals and strategies, and to shape the network's agenda

Power resources and positions of social actors in UNI Network@Quebecor World

- **Peripherical actors**: represent few members and invest limited resources in the network

- **Intermediate actors**: do not represent more members but invest greater resources than peripherical actors (ex: Grafiska organised the first network meeting in 2000; Grafiska and Amicus officials on the steering committee)

- **Central actors**: IBT and CEPW bring the majority of QWI unionized workers, and most of the financial and human resources. IBT at the front of organizing campaigns in the USA. FILPAC-CGT (France) is the main organiser of the network'a activities in Europe.

- **Core actors:UNI and CEPW representatives.** Power basis: UNI as umbrella organization; CEPW representatives have more direct access to the company's management and a CEPW representative act as President of UNI Network and main negotiator for the IFA

Conclusions

- Internal dynamics of cross-border trade union alliances are important at theorical and empirical levels to understand the logic of trade union collective action within MNCs

- Cross-border trade union alliances are structured hierarchies of status and power relations

- Central organisations within UNI Network @Quebecor World were able to bring together and mobilise the members around a common project; they act as «social entrepreneurs» for collective action

- Various power resources explain the positions of trade union actors in the network. The North/South divide remains but is tempered by several factors: trade unions from both North and South are at the network's periphery