“Workers of the world, connect? The impact of ICT on the US social movement unionism. The case of the ‘Fight for 15’ campaign.”

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CRIMT conference // May 2015
Intro- ICT and NSM: a new promise for social movement unionism?

Social movement unionism [as opposed to ‘business unionism’]: hybrid form of unionism oriented toward action (Turner and Hurd, 2001)
ICT and social movement unionism: what the literature(s) says

Frege & Kelly (2003)

- Internal organization
- Coalition building

Online bureaucracy

Connective action

Frege & Kelly (2003)

Digitalized bureaucracy (Lucio & Walker, 2005, Lucio et al., 2007; Kerr & Waddington, 2013)

No central authority + peer-to-peer com. + close legibility (Bennet, 2012, 2014)


Online bureaucracy

Connective action
ICT and social movement unionism: The research question

>> What is the logic of “social movement unionism” in the area of “connective action”? 

>> More precisely: how does the use of ICT and NSM alter the internal organization and external strategy of social movement unionism?
The ‘Fight for 15’ case: a networked and connected campaign

A striking combination of four key characteristics

1- an unlikely development in an under-unionized industry

2- a heavy mobilization of ICT

3- A new division of labor among the various stakeholders – notably the unions

4- A rapid spread across USA and striking results

Basic stats about FFF online

>> Twitter: + 39 K followers
>> Facebook: + 140K ‘likes’
>> Youtube: + 300K views
Findings [1/3]: Stitching offline and online networks

Union Network
>> 115K followers
@seiu
@aflcio
@cwa
@teamsters
@ufcw
@united_here

Occupy Network
>> 210K followers
@occupywallst
@occupywallstny
(Tremayne, 2014)

FFF Campaign Network
>> 39K followers
17 twitter accounts (2 national and 15 local)
Eg. @fightfor15
Findings [1/3]: Stitching offline and online networks

- **FFF + Occupy + Union**
  - 13% overlap

- **FFF + Occupy**
  - 24% overlap

- **FFF + Occupy + Union**
  - 34% overlap
Findings [2/3]: Important local variations in coalition building

Table 2 - Variations in Twitter campaign overlaps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter account</th>
<th>Geographic area</th>
<th>Number of followers</th>
<th>Protestor nb 4/15/15</th>
<th>% following OWS</th>
<th>% following a union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>@fightfor15</td>
<td>National/internat</td>
<td>12,310</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@lowpayisnotok</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>7,069</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@fastfoodforward</td>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>6,514</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@chifightfor15</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>5,809</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@showme_15</td>
<td>Mid-South</td>
<td>4,762</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@raiseupfor15</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>5,628</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@ATLRaiseUp</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>5,819</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@fifteennow</td>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>2,627</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@raiseupmke</td>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>1,436</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@wageaction</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@raiseupma</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@massuniting</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>1,911</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@txorgproject</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>2,346</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@fightfor15texas</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@RaiseUpSanDiego</td>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>1,186</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@fairfastfood</td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>1,182</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@detroit_15</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@15nowMN</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>1,180</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total campaign: 39,304, 20%, 31%

*estimations based on a current data extrapolation*
Findings [3/3]: borrowing the connective communication codes to expend the campaign

*Graph 2* – The 20 most frequent hashtags sent by @ATLraiseup (Atlanta chapter)

Themes related to the hashtags:
- Campaign
- Local
- Internat.
- Gender
- Industry
- Other
- Occupy
- Family
- Racial justice
- Political
- Generic activist
**Discussion: the expended possibilities offered (or not) by ICT and NSM**

- 1) ICT reflects rather than deeply alter the networked and “franchised” nature of social movement unionism.  
\[ \Rightarrow \ \text{no longer “Air / Ground” (Milkman, 2004) but “Network centric warefare”} \]

- 2) ICT offer possibilities to extend coalition building toward networks of activists whose primarily existence is online.

- 3) By borrowing the communication codes of connective social movements, online campaigning eases the convergence of diverse contemporary struggles.

- 4) ICT capacities to broadly involve workers themselves seems so far limited.  
\[ \Rightarrow \ \text{See “action oriented” VS “worker centered organzing ( Sharpe, 2004)”} \]
Thank you very much for attention.

Comments and questions welcome.