

Union communication and their grassroots on social media during collective bargaining

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When communicating with members and the broader public, unions must strike a balance between mobilizing workers against employers and a 'social dialogue' approach emphasizing compromise and negotiated results. However, using social media, grassroots groups with alternate readings of worker-employer relations can now draw on a much larger and stronger platform to create dissent in resistance to official union lines and their balancing efforts. Drawing on a case study of unions and grassroots communication on Facebook during sector collective bargaining, this article explores different strategies for political communication online.

Through an examination of three official trade union communication pages, and four unofficial grassroots' campaign pages we show important similarities and differences in the mode of communication on Facebook by unions and their grassroots. More precisely, we used the open source program Facepager to scrape web data from Facebook's API –giving us all posts, comments, links, pictures, videos, and the number of shares and likes for each post or comment –in the period from February 9 to April 16, 2020. This period represents the time from when the peak bargaining settlement was achieved in the Danish coordinated bargaining system until the results of the membership vote was made official.

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