

DIGITAL'S PROMISE FOR WORKER ORGANIZING: A 2018 UPDATE

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INTRODUCTION

We saw digital organizing becoming dominated by (a) having a lot of money and (b) the scale that technology was providing. There was this one-to-many broadcast mechanism. Everything was blast. We wanted to bring relationships back to digital organizing.

—Perry Rosenstein, Hustle

Digital tools and technologies—most familiarly, apps, websites, internet search engines and social media platforms—have become a central and pervasive feature of our lives.¹

Along with their use in work, recreation, education and many other things, they routinely are used as tools by civil society organizations, advocates and social movements as they work for social change.

This report is about how digital technology is being used by workers and worker organizations, and how its effectiveness might be improved. This work has diverse authors: international unions and union federations, regional offices or locals of same, worker centers or community organizations heavily centered on labor struggles, less place-based advocacy organizations with a focus on worker welfare, or even clusters of individual workers. It takes myriad forms: issue or election campaigns, strikes and work slowdowns, consumer boycotts, picket lines, citizen assemblies, civil disobedience, study groups, varied sorts of advocacy, analysis, opposition research and more.

This report is a scan² of recent activity in this area conducted over the past year by Ársælsson, with help and supervision from Rogers. Along with whatever experience and knowledge each brought to the effort, some reading and the advice of varied colleagues in the academic, labor, community organizing and philanthropy arenas, the scan rested chiefly on extended interviews (recorded and later transcribed) with 41 leading practitioner technologists and activists in the field and a few respected observers of it.

These interviews essentially were open ended, but all rested on a common format of lead questions and guided subsequent probing. Potential interviewees were selected in a variant of “snowballing.” We started with our list, added to it on the advice of the colleagues mentioned above, found new names from suggestions by interviewees themselves, and stopped when we stopped getting additional suggestions.

Our report makes no claim to completeness or representativeness, and is inevitably idiosyncratic. Still, we think it gives a reasonable sense of the current limits and promise of “online” or “digital” worker organizing or advocacy, recent developments in the field and suggestions for its improvement, which is all we initially sought.

We reached no startling conclusions from this scan, but took some general takeaways from it.³ Among them:

- The use of digital tools is showing ever-greater ability to develop and service intentional communities of workers and identify leadership potential within them, as well as expanding the scope and leverage of better-targeted issue campaigns.
- More sophisticated use of more agile and multifunctional tools and platforms now enables, and is widely producing, more extensive use of surveys of workers, retrieval of more information on them, testing of campaign messages and use of data analytics of all kinds in improving the work.
- Application of digital tools and analytics also is enabling and producing more feedback from and action by the field, including suggestions for or

initiation of supplemental or alternative action to that originally suggested by the center. The rise of such “distributed and decentralized organizing” is a major theme in what follows.

- Many old issues in the field persist. Access to and skills competencies within it are very uneven. Especially among organizations used to doing worker organizing other ways, there is commonly resistance to making the costly investment needed to become competent players in digital organizing. As a field of practice, it lacks a community of practice, funds for experimentation, or even places to exchange lessons and strategies.
- Also, and familiar, these activities require additional funding, especially for experimentation with no certain payoff. That as much experimentation still is going within the field, despite the lack of such funding, is testimony to the field’s continued ability to attract talent of all kinds. Surely, those drawn to it must believe in its promise, and surely—at some level of abstraction and generality—that promise is there. But the fact that it has so far eluded financial sustainability is sobering.

Of course, for worker-friendly observers, the fundamental source of interest in digitally supported worker organizing—cited to us by nearly all respondents—is that it gives activists new tools to fight oppressive employers and employment conditions, and organized labor new ways to extend its reach and effectiveness. But in broad terms—and this, too, was said by nearly all our respondents—this promised potential generally has not been met. Why, apart from reasons that might be inferred from the above, has effective practice developed less than many hoped?

The most basic reason is just short of obvious: a lack of agreement on the form and sorts of worker power and the strategy for obtaining them to which such tools would be applied. Organized labor still is reeling from the effective disappearance of the political economy out of which its model of self-sustaining growth appeared: collective bargaining with and representation to particular employers, with members charged for that service.

That model worked well enough in a U.S. economy that, along with being globally dominant and facing exiguous foreign competition at home, was populated

by a relatively limited number of large, sector-dominating, vertically integrated firms that provided ready targets for organizing. But that world is long gone. And while one can imagine any number of new ways in this world by which labor’s work could be made to pay for itself, via members or others, none has yet demonstrated itself at a scale and endurance even promising life beyond the near total corporate domination of American public and private life.

What is clear, however, is that even were such a strategy (or multiple broadly converging strategies) found and embraced by a critical mass of workers, enacting it would be a titanic political fight. In that fight, with digital organizing tools used by both pro-democracy and anti-democracy sides, we are quite confident that lessons and promising experiments from the preceding years of digital worker organizing will find a welcoming audience with labor. Whatever their present tensions, comity and mutual support between non-union-based progressives and the labor movement is a pro-democracy alliance just waiting to happen.

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By way of final prefatory comment before getting to our report, we first say something about its form, and then provide two lists that may be useful to readers of it.

This report scans the current landscape of digital worker organizing, and presents several buckets of concern or salient trends. Again, we make no claim to comprehensiveness, even in capturing all of those.

On the two lists, we give you first a list of those we talked to and their organizational affiliations. Since we don’t have space to introduce all these individuals fully, where possible we provide a hyperlink to their sketch bio. And since the same space constraint applies to their organization, where possible we provide another hyperlink to that, but only if relevant to the discussion that follows.

Note also, in considering this list, that it does not capture the full breadth of worker organizing. We’re certain we’ve missed many involved unions, workers’ centers, or other worker-friendly organizations or campaigns. But the purpose of this report, again, is not to document all that’s happening, but to scan the field and pick up key themes or modes of action. Its measure is not whether we’ve

covered everybody, but whether we've missed some important sort of activity.

The people we talked to:

Bernhardt, Annette: University of California, Berkeley Labor Center
Brown, Rosie: NDWA
Byer, Nate: Blue State Digital
Cain, Matthew: Caring Across Generations
Chartier, Don: HourVoice
Copp, Graham: Working America
Davis, Louis: 32BJ
Dehlendorf, Andrea: OUR Walmart and WorkIt
Dominguez, Neidi: AFL-CIO
Fine, Janice: Rutgers University
Goldbetter, Larry: NWU
Horowitz, Sara: Freelancers Union
Huey, Asher: AFT
Imani, Jakada: Workers Lab
Karpf, David: George Washington University
Lang, Ken: UAW
Lerner, Stephen: Kalmanovitz Initiative, Georgetown University
Manilov, Marianne: The Engage Network
Miller, Michelle: Coworker
Morgan, Conen: Progress Now
Moschella, Michael: DKC Analytics
Parikh, Sejal: Working Washington
Pumarol, Renata: New York Communities for Change
Quinn, Laura: Catalist
Rojas, Carmen: Workers Lab
Rolf, David: SEIU Local 775
Rosenstein, Perry: Hustle
Schlein, Eric: OUR Walmart
Shah, Palak: Fair Care Labs
Sifry, Micah: PDF
Silberman, Michael: Mobilisation Lab
Sipp, Kati: National Guestworker Alliance
Soto, Cal: National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)
Stergalas, Chris: Working America
Sweeney, Christian: AFL-CIO
Swetman, Larry: ROC-United
White, Nathan: MomsRising
Wikler, Ben: MoveOn
Wirth, Alex: Quorum
Woodward, Hilary: Jobs With Justice (now at NWLC)
Young, Brian: Action Network

Second, we provide a list of digital tools—such as apps, software, websites and platforms—mentioned by respondents. Some of these probably are familiar, others not. We have no way of judging that for individual readers, and insufficient space to try to explain the functionalities and relevance of all them in the text. So we opt to explain none of them in detail or consistently, and leave the unfamiliar but curious reader to find out on his or her own. For this, we again provide hyperlinks where possible. The apps are grouped in somewhat idiosyncratic way, by key functionalities highlighted in our discussions with interviewees.

Multipurpose organizing and management platforms

- [Action Kit](#)
- [Action Network](#)[Blue State Digital](#)
- [Nation Builder](#)
- [NGP VAN](#)
- [Salsa Labs](#)
- [UnionTrack®](#)

Recruiting

- [Avaaz](#)
- [Change.org](#)
- [Coworker.org](#)
- Cragislist ads
- Facebook ads
- Google ads
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [MoveOn.org](#)
- [Twitter](#)

Petitions

- [Avaaz](#)
- [Change.org](#)
- [Coworker.org](#)
- [MoveOn.org](#)

Membership dues

- [Braintree](#)
- [UnionTrack®](#)

Fundraising

- [Act Blue](#)
- [Braintree](#)
- Facebook ads
- Google ads

Labor standards enforcement/information

- [GlassDoor](#)
- [Jobcase](#)
- [Jornaler@](#)
- [ROC National Diner's Guide](#)
- [Turkopticon](#)
- [Worker Report](#)

Peer-to-peer communication/information diffusion

- [Basecamp](#)
- [ChatSecure](#)
- (Private) Facebook groups
- [FireChat](#)
- [FreeConferenceCall.com](#)
- [GroupMe](#)
- [Hustle](#)
- [LINE.me](#)
- [MaestroConference](#)
- [Mobile Commons](#)
- [Revolution Messaging](#)
- [Signal Private MessengerSlack](#)
- [ThunderClap](#)
- [Viber](#)
- [WhatsApp](#)
- [YikYak](#)
- [ZenDesk](#)

Distributed leadership

- [Basecamp](#)
- [Celly](#)
- [Consider.it](#)
- (Private) Facebook groups
- [Loomio](#)
- [Remesh](#)
- [Slack](#)
- [Trello](#)

Workflow automation

- [Cloudpipes](#)

Services to workers

- [Even](#)
- [HourVoice](#)
- [Peers.org](#)

Data analysis

- [Attentive.ly](#)
- [Catalist](#)
- [Crowdbooster](#)
- [CrowdTangle](#)
- [Kumu.io](#)
- [QGIS](#)
- [Qlik](#)
- [Remesh](#)
- [Tableau](#)
- [TweetReach](#)

Event management

- [Facebook](#)
- [Hustle](#)
- [Meetup](#)

Crowdsource

- [LittleSis](#) (Power analysis)

A DEBATE WORTH RESIGNING FROM

So online work lets you do [things] more quickly, broader and in a more interesting way. But I think the challenge is that I don't know how and where it goes to the next stage.... showing real power to confront and curb employer abuse.

—Stephen Lerner, Kalmanovitz Initiative, Georgetown University

Digital and online tools have made many worker organizing tasks more efficient and less time intensive, and some virtually costless. Compare, for example, the production and distribution of a printed flier to sending an email or a text message, or collecting signatures at a workplace or street corner versus petition sites such as MoveOn.org or CoWorker.org. Digital tools enable organizers to run campaigns at greater scale with less effort. Social media allows organizations to amplify their message to reach even greater numbers of people, including many prohibitively difficult to connect to.

Nobody disputes these obvious facts. What is disputed is their impact, especially if not supplemented by in-person organizing and field action, in actually building worker power and getting results. Stephen Lerner, quoted above, tells the story of a campaign in which striking workers showed their displeasure at the owner of the company they were in dispute with by sending him bags of garbage. Literally; they printed the owner's office address on empty garbage bags, filled them, affixed necessary postage and mailed them off. As Lerner goes on, "This was all pre-internet. But you could say the idea, which caught on, went viral. Literally tons of garbage were sent to the guy from all over the country. When I later met him he told me 'Man, I knew I was in trouble when I got my third dumpster of garbage.'" The strike was settled in a victory for the workers, who also did many other things in the field besides mailing garbage bags.

Is there any equivalent in the online-only world? The answer is yes and no and yes again. This might suggest a problem with the question itself, but leaving that aside:

Yes, in the sense that there have been many successful campaigns, more or less entirely online, that have changed corporate behavior. Most of these, thus far, have dealt with "soft" issues, not cutting into the offending management's bottom line. The campaign by Starbucks baristas to let them show their tattoos at work, facilitated by Co-Worker, brought a change in company policy permitting that. There were no street protests or picket signs, but word got out, stories of aggrieved baristas got told, and Howard Schultz caved on the issue. Michelle Miller, co-founder of Co-Worker, thinks there is a simple online equivalent of a picket line: negative company publicity. Andrea Dehlendorf and Eric Schlein, formerly of Our Walmart and now with WorkIt, credit the public pressure arising from their massive publicity of Walmart's low wages and abusive scheduling and benefit practices, virtually all online, for helping greatly in successful efforts to get Walmart to raise its wages (at least a bit) and improve (at least some of) its oppressive human resource policies.

No, in the sense that we could find very few successful campaigns, however much supported by online publicity, that didn't involve some workers stepping away from their smart phones and computers and showing their protest to the public. The Walmart campaign rested on all that negative publicity, but what really got the company's attention were the spectacular nationwide walkouts and picket lines by Walmart workers on Black Friday, the American consuming public's sacred day of post-Thanksgiving shopping. The Fight for 15 and a union campaign that succeeded in putting many cities on the way to a massive increase in area minimum wages

also required that. The protests over predatory financial institutions all involved it. So did protests over the Keystone Pipeline. Virtually every successful wage and working conditions or social justice struggle we heard that featured heavy online organizing involved some such physical presence of those protesting, often action that put them at financial or other risk.

But yes again in the sense that to take such public action, especially without legal protection and insurance against financial risk, is something most people don't do until they feel confident they will do it with others, ideally many others. But for that to happen, and for individuals to see themselves as participating in it, often first requires a prior effort to build the larger intentional community they are willing to take action with. Even under the best of circumstances that takes time, and much of the organizing that concerns us here did not take place under circumstances reasonably described as "best." The workers at issue in online organizing often were very geographically dispersed, under constant management surveillance at their worksite, and often feeling quite isolated, alone and powerless. Online organizing helped first by simply enabling them to be reached at all, and then to be able to talk with one another.

Consider Walmart, a giant firm, employing millions of people distributed over thousands of stores. The OUR Walmart organizers always were interested in getting from online to the field. But given the size and dispersion of that behemoth, they started not just with publicity against Walmart's abusive practices, but by using private Facebook groups to get them talking to one another, sharing grievances and ideas, and providing emotional support. For example, "Treasures Walmart Rejected" (commonly known as Treasures), one of the most popular of these sites—started by a worker, not the organizers themselves—largely was devoted to people getting recognition and empathy from fellow workers, along with a few tips on dealing with the disrespect they felt on the job. From online groups to area in-person meetings was a next step, and then more in-person outreach at worksites themselves, but with online reporting and getting feedback from co-workers throughout.

Pretty clearly, online tools are simply part of a repertoire of tools and experiences in collective action. They can stand alone, often with great effect. They almost always are improved by, and in hard fights almost always require, in-person exchanges and actions. They are not some magical thing that routinely achieves power without any effort or risk. The right debate should not be about whether online tools can be useful (since they can be), or about online versus offline action (since they clearly feed and affect one another), but rather, about strategies and tactics of their best integration.

GETTING STARTED AND GOING MOBILE

What we're seeing and learning is that in a lot of lower-middle-income places, people don't have desktop computers. For a lot of people, their only way to communicate is on a phone.

—Chris Stergalas, Working America

Many worker-directed organizations, particularly unions, still are struggling to secure what Ben Wikler of MoveOn called “the central pillar of online organizing—a combination of a website and an email list—with the email list the more important one.” Petition sites such as MoveOn have been very successful in working from this pillar. And campaign and organizing platforms such as Action Network, Nation Builder and Blue State Digital (to name a few), largely built around email lists, have added much functionality to their management. Organizers now, relatively easily, can leverage information contained in their email lists by segmenting, “A/B” testing of alternative messages, and micro-targeting different groups—important because small differences in message can make a big difference in response, and almost any group membership has important differences within it. But many parts of our highly decentralized labor movement—from international unions down to local labor councils and union locals—are lagging on these basics. In particular, their electoral operations generally are much more digitally savvy than their email use in day-to-day program clarification, messaging and member engagement, or even their base websites. As Mike Moschella of DKC Analytics, who has worked with many unions, observes, “a lot of unions struggle just to get a modern website up. Sometimes just literally having a basic online site that looks like it was built in the year 2016, that looks like you're legitimate, would be a step forward.”

In the meantime, of course, most of the world has gone mobile. That means most digital organizing needs to be thought of as a phone-based medium. This creates immediate problems of appearance for digital communication strategies still largely desktop-based. One of the big things is getting away from thinking about how things look on a computer, in the office, and more

about what it looks like on a worker's phone. And that phone will be doing a lot of work for workers, with many expecting, with Schlein, that “in the future people will be able to access everything on their smartphone about their work-related problems, whether it's a safety and health violation or a problem with their manager.” But of course it goes deeper than appearance and accessibility, with focus shifting toward engagement and action.

Another evolution is interfacing with the social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter, etc. Any digital organizing that doesn't respect that dominance fails to meet people where they are. Most worker organizations, of course, have some sort of presence on Facebook. Most common strategies are blast and broadcast; fewer strategies lead to deeper engagement.

As Moschella summarizes, would-be worker organizers today need to use, as appropriate, several core modes of communication: “email, text messaging, Twitter, Facebook, phone banking, door-to-door canvass and the [door-to-door or simply person-to-person] conversation.” Organizations that only engage with existing or prospective members or targets through one or the other simply are limiting their reach and potential impact. But looking at the vast number of organizations in this field, almost none are good at all those things. And while in theory one could optimize by sorting organizations and assigning work among them by distinctive competence, and then sharing results, there is little organizational appetite for that.

There is no single solution, no package of tools and strategies optimal for every union and worker organization. Selecting the right digital tools and strategies can be difficult, highlighting the importance

of skilled and experienced staff. Both context and composition of members and allies are deciding factors. The most precarious, many of whom don't have smartphones, only can be reached by conventional phone services and messaging. Other groups, for example educated young people, also use messaging services extensively rather than talking on the phone. Many are experimenting with messaging services such as Hustle, Mobile Commons and WhatsApp. Hustle allows you to send peer-to-peer personal text messages at scale—with limits—to reach out to members.

Interestingly, users of Hustle report even higher response rates than phone calls, while being less time intensive.

The bottom line is that Wikler's "basics" of a modern attractive website and tested and targeted email blasts are both necessary and quickly becoming insufficient. Organizers need to go mobile in all sorts of ways, harness and use results in ways that enhance the design of those basics, but all the while not miss the most basic and proven technology—friendly and persuasive conversation—as they try to move people to action.

BUILDING ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITIES

I don't think of private Facebook groups as a tool to achieve specific goals, but rather a community, a central place where we can all go to talk.

—Digital organizer

Online spaces, fostering dialogue among people separated by great distances, are not new. But social media and the increase in the number of smartphones have expanded the number of spaces and the people who share them. And while no one thinks online communication can (at least currently) fully replace face-to-face interaction, it offers different options and opportunities: Many people can “speak” at the same time while also preserving the whole dialogue for later access. It is less rich than face-to-face—tone, facial expressions, body language, etc., are lost—but much more efficient for imparting information. Despite these limitations, many online spaces are vibrant and close-knit communities. More importantly, recent examples, such as OUR Walmart discussed below, show how they can build trust and solidarity, aid in identifying leaders and issues, move people into action, and offer support and assistance to workers.

Dehlendorf of the Walmart campaign revealed that “a tremendous amount of conversation was already on social media around workplace issues” before the group started using private Facebook groups in its organizing. In fact, organizers found more than 1 million conversations among more than 100,000 people in more than 2,500 stores across the country—a staggering amount of conversations, but unsurprising given the problems and grievances of Walmart workers, who reached out to co-workers for support and assistance.

OUR Walmart did not have paid organizers to do conventional organizing of a network of that size and geographical dispersion, so workers started forming private Facebook groups. For example, “Treasures” was a group for those who felt disrespected to share and find emotional support. It became one of the most active Facebook groups within the OUR Walmart network and spurred the growth of the whole ecosystem. Marianne

Manilov from the Engage Network, who was a consultant to OUR Walmart, calls online worker spaces, like Treasures, “a community of care.”

Organizers, though, need to be relational in their approach to building online communities. As Neidi Dominguez at the AFL-CIO succinctly points out, “If you’re going to go organize undocumented workers in South Central LA, don’t send a white guy that doesn’t speak Spanish.” And Manilov suggests leader-driven networks are more powerful:

Sending out an email saying ‘hey, take an action,’ is quite different than ‘hi, I’m a leader who is a mother who works at Walmart and I’m asking you to join a private Facebook group called Respect the Bump where we’re going to share our experiences as mothers.’

Schlein thinks the online communities really “helped to move people into action.” But organizers need to be careful to not make asks too early. It takes time to build trust and solidarity—perhaps even longer in online spaces.

Online spaces also are helpful in finding members—especially for diffused and dispersed workforces—which can be a major task. Consider, for example, domestic workers who don’t share workplaces, whom organizers would try to find in parks and at bus stops, looking for people pushing strollers or carrying cleaning products. Now organizers can find and reach out to workers online, for example with Facebook ads and searching on Craigslist. Previously, many of these workers were out of reach, especially those beyond central points of communities and in more isolated areas. Yet searching for domestic workers online still is time intensive, according to Rosie Brown at the National Domestic

Workers Alliance. Organizers are experimenting and trying to figure out the most effective ways to find workers. This is a potential area of opportunity for digital tool development, possibly by using automated text analysis and machine-learning, to assist in finding new members for organizations.

Private Facebook groups are not the only tool that allows organizers to “bring back relational organizing.” For Rosenstein at Hustle—a text messaging tool directly connecting organizers and members to send out information, elicit feedback, collect data or just have conversations—the digital space has a “tendency towards one-to-many...while relationships used to be the bedrock for a lot of organizations.” Hustle was designed specifically for complex organizations with thousands or hundreds of thousands of relationships. Each text message has a designated organizer (or a group of organizers) who answer questions and take part in a dialogue with members. It has been particularly successful in event recruitment, especially in getting people to a local event. Take, for example, Rosenstein’s personal experience from Bernie Sanders campaign:

I was the first person in California to use Hustle to organize a Bernie event, and there are a few of them I still text with, 10 months later. They just became friends in the neighborhood.

At a higher level it helps identify hand raising, members who are willing to get more involved, and builds relationships beyond campaigns. Online spaces in general help identify issues and leaders more quickly, while facilitating collective alignment and building a critical mass.

Brown describes her experience using private Facebook groups as being “pretty successful,” especially in combination with sending emails and calling people directly—enabling people to “form a real relationship with people where they feel comfortable with sharing their ideas.” Online, especially private, spaces provide workers the opportunity to seek solutions to their shared problems and struggles, which they might hesitate to discuss in their own workplace. Through these online conversations workers realize their concerns are shared by their peers—breaking isolation while building trust and solidarity.

DISTRIBUTED AND DECENTRALIZED ORGANIZING

What's been most intriguing to me [about digital organizing] is the distributed leadership potential.

—Janice Fine, Rutgers University

Of all the issues raised in our interviews, distributed and decentralized organizing evoked the most discussion, hope and interest. Digital technology enables the coordination of action at scale, where organizing activities previously required significant resources. Reflecting on developments following the Howard Dean campaign, Michael Silberman of the Mobilisation Lab states that digital tools have become “the underlying infrastructure for organizing programs where you don’t have staff anywhere.” Digitally based infrastructure offers a range of functions. Some distribute tasks among members, while others decentralize activities such as agenda and strategy setting.⁴

A key question, raised by Silberman, facing organizations is “to what extent leaders are interested and willing to empower people to run with elements of an organization or a campaign?” And while respondents disagree to some extent on that question, virtually all agree that we need more distributed and decentralized organizing.

Many think organizing is undergoing a shift, where the importance and dominance of centralized and hierarchical organizations is decreasing. Digital technologies, some argue, allow workers to self-direct their own campaigns. Manilov states:

Until fairly recently, we used to get all of our news from a centralized source. Three or four people would sit in a room, an editor or a team would decide, and they'd put it out on CNN. I remember journalists saying to people that Twitter would never be a credible news source. Now Twitter is almost always the place where news breaks. Organizing is going through the same shift. It used to often be that a small team at a national organization would make a decision and put out a campaign or a project. Now Dreamers or Black Lives Matter organize in

new ways, online to field that build power. I think we're at a time where people-led efforts are going to be stronger, broader and faster. And today one of the central questions is how organizations learn to adapt, listen and give power to those most impacted in the network.

Miller thinks worker organizations need to be attuned to worker’s priorities and “to treat them like thinking adults and not like pitchfork carriers—which at our worst, the progressive movement has done for many years.” Others acknowledge the potential of distributed and decentralized organizing but remain concerned about balance. Nathan White at MomsRising expressed concern that such decentralization creates “a lot of tension around how your organization is represented and how tightly you want to control the message and the issues that your base is active on.” Sara Horowitz at the Freelancers Union notes that “we need to get the balance right [because] it’s not like all decentralization is good.” Many of the tensions around distributed and decentralized organizing are age-old organizational issues. Digital tools offer new ways to navigate heterogeneous interests and distorted information.

Tools such as Slack—a group discussion forum and communications tool successfully used in the Bernie Sanders campaign—enable coordination of multiple actions across states. Tasks such as phone banking or direct action events can be distributed among large groups by making the task description and information available either online or through an app. When participants run into problems, have a question or need to share something important, they can reach out on Slack to find guidance from the collective or offer advice themselves. The experience and skills of organizers are made more easily accessible, as well as that of other active participants.

EXAMPLES OF DECENTRALIZATION AND DISTRIBUTION THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

CoWorker.org—a digital petition platform for workers—presents a useful example of this model. CoWorker.org helps workers refine, articulate and make public their claims, but also assists them in engaging media and leveraging social media tools to build networks with their fellow employees. Each petition has the potential to create a network of workers within their workplace. Petitions also identify which issues workers are willing to mobilize around, prioritizing issues in heterogeneous groups. According to Miller at CoWorker.org, their goal “is to figure out how we cultivate decentralized digital networks of employees, to start to have them be power centers inside multinational corporations to advance workers’ agendas and improve working conditions.”

For example, more than 10% of the global workforce of Starbucks—38,000 baristas from 30 countries—are now a network through **CoWorker.org**. The barista network grew out of a successful tattoos campaign and there have been more than 40 other campaigns run on CoWorker.org; it has “really taken on more of the material demands that are part of traditional labor organizing,” according to Miller. The baristas coordinate through online networks when crafting their message and claims. A recent example is a [campaign](#) around shops being understaffed and a lack of available shifts, leading to Starbucks’ CEO responding to demands.

Without CoWorker.org, these networks and campaigns might not have materialized. Miller thinks the worker networks emerging from CoWorker.org petitions are growing in sophistication and that there is “increasing recognition from [for example] Starbucks that this network is a force to contend with.” And while it is too early to judge just how successful such campaigns can be, CoWorker.org shows that decentralized networks can build solidarity and power with minimum professional organizer support—CoWorker.org has a staff of three.

FixMyJob.com, by Working America, provides workers with information about their rights and, also, how to organize themselves by following a step-by-step online tutorial; it’s a worthwhile experiment in facilitating self-directed worker organizing. While not as successful as some hoped, many visit the site for information on workers’ rights. Christian Sweeney of the AFL-CIO thinks that “ultimately the interface was not that successful at getting people to participate and promoting the site was a challenge.”

It also is worth pointing out that FixMyJob.com is a tutorial for *face-to-face* organizing—the only exception being a reference to public petitions using CoWorker.org (and as of June 2016 no one had created a petition directly through FixMyJob.com). An iterated version of FixMyJob.com might include a tutorial on how to use various digital tools in organizing. But perhaps it also needs a different approach to building trust and solidarity among workers before moving them up the ladder of engagement.

WorkIt—an app and website offering workplace support and advice from peers with the assistance of an AI—is one of the most exciting digital tools still in development. Emerging out of OUR Walmart, it responds to the dispersed, unsystematic and often inaccessible online conversations already happening on social media. Decentralization is a driving principle, something Dehlendorf from WorkIt learned during her experience with OUR Walmart:

Engaging in and watching the social media stuff really take off was all about just letting go and realizing the base knows way more about any of this than I do. It’s about how do we adapt systems to support what people are already doing instead of assuming that we’re going to come in with the answers for them on how to do it. It fundamentally and completely changed my entire existence as a labor organizer and leader.

Workers post questions and get advice from peers as well as experts. IBM’s AI Watson assists by identifying the most relevant information in each instance—becoming increasingly effective in providing targeted information over time. WorkIt is similar to FixMyJob.org in that it offers advice and information to workers about their rights and other issues of concern, but it has a different theory of change: WorkIt connects workers to each other and allows them to communicate and build networks, and its database is expanding rather than static. The goal is that, similar to CoWorker.org, networks of workers will be able to either self-organize or be organized into action.

Yet despite all the interest and admiration of projects such as OUR Walmart and CoWorker.org by our respondents, including members in meaningful decision making—decentralized organizing is a rare find in digital worker organizing. RePurpose was a brief experiment in 2012 by Workers Voice, giving workers a voice in exchange for action. David Karpf from George Washington University thinks the fundamental idea behind RePurpose is one of the “holy grails” in worker organizing. Numerous projects have experimented with “gamification,” but what RePurpose did differently was instead of a gift for participation or success in the “game,” participants got “governance voice”—the power to decide how to spend resources on future campaigns. For Karpf, it aligns incentives in a good way, forcing organizations to be clear about their goals, strategies and tasks while giving those who actually contribute a voice in future decision making—combining distributed and decentralized organizing.

Recent experiments in public deliberation—such as the Oregon Citizen Initiative Review and Deliberative Polling—might be of interest to worker organizations. These experiments show that people, despite rational ignorance and systematic misinformation, change their opinion and priorities on issues after participating in structured deliberation with fellow citizens. These deliberative bodies often are called mini-publics because they are made up of randomly selected citizens. Their goal is to ascertain what the larger public *would think* if they had deliberated and reflected carefully on an issue.

Participants often are empowered and gain a deeper understanding, which might make them more likely to take action. A number of recent digital tools can facilitate decentralized decision making within organizations, including Loomio, Consider.it and ReMesh. While these tools do not replicate all the features of face-to-face deliberations, they are more cost efficient. Loomio is an online decision-making platform that offers groups a structured approach to discussing an issue or problem and reaching a conclusion. ReMesh is an artificial intelligence platform that analyzes natural language to find common ground or consensus among large groups discussing a topic. There has been a proliferation of such tools in recent years and further rapid development is expected.

Decentralized organizing is hardly a new phenomenon. What is new is that digital tools enable even highly centralized organizations to encourage it within some purposive structure. Developing digital strategies aimed at increased decentralization and distribution might offer new opportunities for building power among workers. Digital tools like CoWorker.org, Slack and Loomio, for example, offer more efficient and cheaper ways to get diverse input and effort from dispersed and varied populations on common tasks and campaigns.

ANALYTIC ORGANIZING AND LEVERAGING DATA

Gee, I only wish we had time for metrics!

—Digital organizer

The use of data in organizing generally can be split into two categories. First, data is used to make tasks more efficient, for example in measuring message resonance or identifying target groups using techniques such as A/B testing. This is sometimes referred to as analytical organizing. Second, data is used to frame issues and add weight to particular claims. While there is considerable and justified excitement about more refined targeting, some are worried it may lead organizers to focus too much on those already convinced. In other words, that organizers may stop trying to influence people.

Additionally, some also think there are significant holes in the type of data being collected, potentially leading to misinterpretation of a surveyed base. Laura Quinn at Catalist thinks that “the data, up until now, supports quantitative analysis pretty well, and what’s missing is exactly a lot of the factors that at this point are mainly observable in a qualitative way.” She and others are looking at how we might improve and points towards using the “exhaust from digital communications and natural language processing with machine learning to better capture qualitative sentiment, intensity and enthusiasm.”

There is important work to be done in figuring out what qualitative information is valuable and accessible. And currently, data analysis is too focused on the present, where models mostly predict whether someone is likely to take action at this point in time, but doesn’t tell us much what he/she might do in the future. We need to “increasingly look at people over time,” Quinn thinks, and learn how people change to better understand their trajectories.

Related to missing data is the quality of data. Carmen Rojas at The Workers Lab told us that in their work they identified a number of organizations that had low-quality data—even on such basic facts as their membership.

When the Workers Lab was investigating whether organization could generate revenue from technology, it quickly realized membership numbers often were inflated. In some instances, the difference between the stated active membership and those willing to give funds was a thousandfold. Many organizations survey their workers on a regular basis and increasingly so online, reaching out on social media or through their email lists. But it can be difficult to gain reliable insights, especially about groups that are for some reason ill-defined and difficult to reach. Researchers such as Annette Bernhardt at the UC Berkeley Labor Center have developed a number of techniques—under the heading of respondent-driven surveys—to gain representative insights. Sejal Parikh at Working Washington thinks member surveys have been helpful in shaping their policies and strategies, identifying leaders and issues, and figuring out the nuances of how to frame an issue, i.e., what the relevant and respectful language should be.

Analytic organizing emphasizes listening, and involves the extensive testing of claims, priorities, messages and frames, figuring out what is of interest to members. Karpf makes a distinction between “external and internal listening.” External listening is the analysis of demographics to refine and target messages to maximize their impact—widely used, for example, in GOTV work. Internal listening is monitoring what existing members are talking about.

For external listening, the goal and message are predetermined, while in internal listening, you are seeking out directions. Various data techniques can be used in either instance. Testing can be used to figure out “the membership journey to get people on email lists to do more and more things...not just for the number of clicks on a petition or number of donations, [but] more broadly and holistically to refine tactics and build power,” according to Karpf. Recently, the emphasis with big

data has been too heavy on external listening. Quality internal listening supports decentralized organizing, and can yield more reliable and systematic information than, for example, unstructured conversations in private Facebook groups.

Building on the importance of listening, both internally and externally, many on-the-ground worker organizers find worker priorities to be different from what they expected, i.e., the focus of their organization. Chris Stergalas at Working America, reflecting on the experience from FixMyJob.com, said that “sometimes there can be a disconnect between what the workers that we’re trying to organize actually want and what we think they want.” In fact, most of the traffic on FixMyJob.com was around not having access to bathrooms or lunch break facilities at work as well as having a disrespectful boss. These surprised organizers somewhat; that issues such as wage theft, not getting paid enough and equal pay were not the most popular issues. And Stergalas thinks “it could drive more organizing.” His thoughts echo the experience from OUR Walmart, discussed above, that many of the most inspiring campaigns, which went viral and moved people into action, were “trivial.” Consider this example from OUR Walmart provided by Manilov:

Leader-led organizing builds power. In OUR Walmart, part of the success is leaders are allowed to choose what [is] most important to them. For example, there was a case in Florida where an elderly gentleman, Richard Vincent, had his stool taken away from him. He had pain in his legs and he was a greeter. A campaign was launched by local workers that he should have a stool. What was amazing about it was that it went viral throughout the worker network. Something that could’ve been an in-store action by a group of workers went viral and national because it was, I think, representative of the deep cruelty of Walmart. Women having to carry boxes of bleach while pregnant, elderly people in pain, people paid so little and shifts so irregular that they were hungry—these are the stories that came out through the organizing practice of leader-led [campaigns]. Social media spreads because of authentic stories that move people, and organizations are going to need to listen and empower front-line people to speak and organize in ways that are true for them.

Even without systematic data collection, internal listening of conversations in online spaces and networks can facilitate action. The recent Starbucks barista campaign on CoWorker.org, discussed above, emerged out of their online networks. Baristas were experiencing labor cuts and underemployment in shops. Individually, many thought it was just incidental—something happening at their store—but through their networks quickly realized it was systematic at the national level. CoWorker.org also was able to survey Uber drivers quickly when the company cut fares early in 2016. When a quick poll of drivers showed they were losing \$100 to \$200 a week and that 60% were considering quitting, “it really helped those drivers start to see that what they were experiencing was happening at a national level,” Miller told us. Similarly, WorkIt, building on its decentralized architecture, will aggregate data. Organizers can, for example, detect when numerous workers ask a similar question about an issue or workplace. Such patterns reveal changes in company policies or public regulation. Conversely, when policy changes are known, WorkIt can push out questions to networks and gather information on their effects.

CoWorker.org recently received funding from the Knight Foundation to systematically collect and analyze data in its networks. Miller said the idea is to “tap into the aggregate worker brain” in a more systematic way, allowing organizers to spot patterns and even anticipate changes in workplaces and sectors. The idea is to collect three kinds of data. First, basic demographic data—providing a picture of workers, their conditions and development over time. Second, survey data from their networks around issues of concern and potential claims. Lastly, natural language data that flows through their networks, such as comments on CoWorker.org, Facebook threads and from surveys.

Miller thinks worker organizers need to “confront the accumulation of data as something as powerful as the accumulation of capital.” Corporations are deploying data and algorithms in their work and some worker organizations are not—a “huge blind spot,” according to Miller. Companies have much greater access and capacity to collect and analyze data about their own workforce than workers—data that companies then cite publicly in support of their claims. Aggregated data allows worker organizers to make data-driven counterclaims, often even disproving claims made by companies.

Data can be a powerful tool in any bargaining context and data can be leveraged in different ways. For example, reliable data showing mistreatment of workers can be leveraged to push socially responsible investors—allying investors and workers against employers. Most companies, whether socially responsible or not, also prefer to avoid negative media coverage. Miller told us that *when* they had good data, for example on Uber drivers, the media was “quite eager to report on what we have to say.” For Miller, the equivalent of dumping garbage in someone’s backyard is dumping negative media coverage and social media blasts about companies. A New York Times article about how a company failed to enact on its promises is garbage in your backyard. Corporations don’t want negative stories being told about them, and they don’t want workers framing the public narrative. “The threat of media and brand damage has been a central component of the work that we’ve been able to do,” said Miller.

Social media is playing an increasingly important role, for example, in the successful Starbucks barista tattoo campaign. In particular, a clever Instagram campaign, suggested by a worker, “where they were photographing their tattoos and then using the Starbucks hashtag.” Starbucks was flooded by decorated forearms for days. Perhaps that’s what an online picket line looks like, a flood of symbolic messages in a social media space—or, in Miller’s words, “an aggregation of digital demands and images that surround a brand or company.”

A number of tools are being developed to assist workers report and/or access information on wage theft violations and, more broadly, the quality of working conditions and benefits. At a higher level, the aggregated data such apps provide can reveal patterns of mistreatment that can be used, perhaps with other data, to figure out trends. Worker Report—a mobile app based on the foundations of SeeClickFix—supported by The Workers Lab, allows workers to easily and quickly report any mistreatment, such as wage theft and violations of health and safety regulations. Such information then would be processed by worker centers, or possibly public agencies, which would take appropriate measures. HourVoice—a mobile app that allows hour workers to anonymously rate employers, share information and track their hours—also aims at aggregating data to identify groups that are in need of organizing support and ready to take action.

Jornaler@ is a collaborative project involving the AFL-CIO, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, National Day Laborer Organizing Network, New Immigrant Community Empowerment, the Worker Institute at Cornell University and local day labor groups in New York. Designed for day laborers, it combines the function of Worker Report and HourVoice. The app is an online version of small notebooks distributed to workers to account for their hours and other information necessary to follow up on wage theft. An interesting feature of the app is that when someone doesn’t get paid, the app pushes out a Tweet to those within a certain radius, warning others. Jornaler@ took some time to development, with many useful “learning opportunities” along the way. One of the key lessons from its development, applicable to any worker-centered app, is that there is commonly a steep learning curve among intended users. This recommends their involvement, with an invitation to test and comment, very early in any such app’s development.

While crowd sourcing was, somewhat surprisingly, rarely brought up by respondents, one, LittleSis.org—a database of “who-knows-who at the heights of business and government”—highlights its potential. The name comes from the idea of watching from below vs. Big Brother watching from above, and focuses on power analysis. Much of the data is updated automatically, but at its core there is a user community that adds and manages the dataset, similar to a Wiki site. Crowd sourcing utilizes the time, interest and increasing expertise of the public—simultaneously “democratizing and demystifying,” as Lerner put it, adding that “organizing tends to be more powerful if people figure it out themselves, than if we announce from on high.” Such projects, especially over time, can become more expansive than anything a handful of analysts could achieve.

Data can be a powerful tool, but also is powerful in and of itself. An old and effective defensive tactic is to cast doubt and spread uncertainty. Data can debunk such attempts, or at least limit their effectiveness. But quality data about the problems and priorities of a membership is valuable, which can guide strategy, assist in framing and even set the agenda.

PITFALLS AND BARRIERS

It's not necessarily an age thing, because younger organizers [will] come to me and say 'we need a website,' but what they really want is a petition or a landing page—there's a lot of not knowing what you need.

—Asher Huey, AFT

The most obvious but also important reason many organizations have been slow to integrate and experiment with digital organizing is that it's new; many tools are less than a year old and the oldest have been around for a few years. Facebook, for example, has been around for 13 years, and data analytics in worker organizing for only a few. And while there are many tools already available that enable distributed or decentralized digital organizing, there are many more that more or less support face-to-face organizing. Unfortunately, resources spent on experiments and development of digital worker organizing—as opposed to electoral—are very limited.

While many organizations are doing OK in terms of having digital organizers and data analysts, others are struggling. Some we talked to were the only staff member—not even full time—responsible for digital and data management. Somewhat unsurprisingly, many felt overwhelmed:

With one person, you can only focus on so many things at a time. Right now, we're running state campaigns in four different states, and so I haven't sent an email to my national list all month—I don't have time to think about what we should say to them.

Beyond those emails not being sent out there is social media, analytics, text messaging, event organizing, private groups—the list goes on. Often those responsible for digital organizing don't have previous experience or education in that line of work. Some organizations contract or buy professional assistance, for example, from Blue State Digital. David Rolf at the SEIU thinks that “every labor organization ought to have a chief technology organizer and they all be trying experiments

every week—to figure out how to leverage this incredible connectivity into something that's much more powerful in terms of collective action.” Lacking expertise can leave you vulnerable and blinded to pitfalls as well as opportunities—one of the challenges being that “we actually don't know what we don't know,” as Palak Shah at the Fair Care Labs put it.

Changing established practices can be challenging and this is apparent in the emerging context of digital organizing. Of course more funds for development and more staff are great, but in some instances having a lot of resources might work against digital organizing. Schlein, when asked whether funds and resources were a barrier to their organizing, warned that more staff might tip the scale toward too much centralization: “the more staff you get, the more work you shift to staff”—work that otherwise would empower and involve workers. More funds need to be directed toward digital organizers who support workers in their organizing. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the success stories of distributed organizing are described as “punching above their weight.”

While digital tools can be used in innovative ways, most of them were built for different purposes—mostly electoral—and not worker organizing. Many tools, including the email list, are broadcast based, which also tend to be well understood and developed. What traditionally has been underdeveloped, according to Silberman, are “platforms for group formation, group networking and event organizing”—the building blocks of distributed and decentralized organizing. For example, Brian Young at Action Network told us about the success of their event tool in the Black Friday strikes against Walmart in 2012.

“All of the materials people needed—fliers, instructions on how to hold an event, etc. (kind of a campaign in a box)—were uploaded along with all the Walmart stores in the country; then people could adopt a store and run an event,” Young explained. The tool also was used in the Keystone Pipelines campaign and to organize the Women’s March and Sister Marches in January 2017. It allows grassroots organizers to run events, instead of in the traditional way of assigning locations to paid organizers. There is some, but nowhere near enough, innovation and development in this area.

There is a lack of capital willing to experiment and fail in digital organizing space. “We need lots of experiments,” Micah Sifry at Personal Democracy Media emphasized, adding that “the typical VC will bet on a hundred different startups, assuming that ninety-seven of them are going to fail—we need lots of failure and to learn from all these failures.”

Rojas thinks that in addition to more, patient and flexible funding, the funding structure needs to be “more dynamic”—that worker organizations, philanthropy and others should give “people a good amount of money

and see what happens. If their projects don’t work out, there should be a commitment to share lessons with the broader field so we don’t keep wasting resources.” There is a staggering difference in resources going into the development of tools for political compared with worker organizing—with a vast majority of innovation coming out of election campaigns. Each election cycle spawns new firms that produced a tool and/or provided services that made a difference during a campaign. Worker organizers simply do not have access to comparable funds.

Too few civic tech funders are supporting digital technology for workers. Rojas “honestly doesn’t see it evolving very much unless people start to redirect resources.” Worker organizations have struggled to convince funders of civic tech that digital technology for workers per se is important or relevant. By contrast, CoWorker.org, an emerging leader in the digital organizing field, has been successful in attracting new and impressive funders without increasing its budget and staff: “We’re still the same three people, and as you can tell, I’m really not very happy about that,” Miller said. The resounding consensus among those we talked to was that funding of digital technology is “completely insufficient in the workers’ space.”

CONCLUSION

Worker organizing has its challenges. It requires the coordination of heterogeneous groups, composed of isolated and often precarious workers, in campaigns with an indeterminate structure and duration, involving high risk, time and energy. No tool can dissolve worker organizing from being a struggle involving risks and opposition. Increasing access, capacity and use of digital technologies will further raise the importance and impact of digital tools for organizing. Unfortunately, a lack of investment in digital tools development and experimentation means slow progress. But observing this hardly provides reason for despair, since there are emerging strategies and complementary tools available. The key question seems to be around identifying what digital organizing strategy is appropriate for the context before reaching for available tools.

Recent digital tools, such as Slack and Hustle, have made co-ordination of dispersed and heterogeneous groups easier, often without having significant resources and paid staff on the ground. As a result, many perceive a shift from broadcast strategies—for many a return—to relational organizing, allowing organizers and members to interact more deeply. But broadcast tools still are useful, and perhaps the better description is that relational tools and strategies are expanding more rapidly. Relational organizing, including dialogue in private online spaces, helps to build trust and solidarity among workers, breaking isolation, and identifying leaders and issues. Such tools and spaces can promote and facilitate distributed, decentralized and self-directed organizing.

Distributed organizing is likely to develop faster than decentralized, since the former fits more comfortably with current hierarchical structures. But the latter is no less important to explore—both peer-to-peer structures, such as WorkIt, and more inclusive decision making at an organizational level, such as Loomio. Any organization willing to include members in setting the agenda must ensure participation is well defined and has a meaningful impact. This is why structures that reward contribution with voice, such as RePurpose, have real promise.

And special care must be taken to support the most precarious, whose voice is least likely to be raised and heard.

Informed decisions require updated, representative and reliable information—which necessitates special care, especially for ill-defined membership groups. Collecting data is important to understand the priorities of members, but also to counter misinformation put out by opposing corporations and organizations. Quality information can bring to light violations and mistreatment, shifting the focus of media attention and reforming alliances. Testing methods can make the crucial difference in framing and micro-targeting. Involving members in collecting and analyzing data, i.e., crowd sourcing, is less explored but might prove valuable collectively and individually.

There are limits, barriers and dilemmas facing self-directed organizing. Most organizing campaigns require a “critical mass” of resources, activists with certain skills and supporters. Large groups are more likely to reach critical mass, but also to be more heterogeneous and diffused. The needs of small and large groups, therefore, might be different: the former in need of resources and capacity, the latter of trust and solidarity and coordination. Thus, different tools suit different groups and campaigns, and tensions around priorities will abound between groups and leadership and members, in part because of rational ignorance and systematic misinformation.

There is no magic formula to figuring out which strategies are going to be most effective. For some groups, for example, strategy identification and learning curves for new tools are so steep they defeat its purpose, while others demand a level of sophistication beyond the resources of most organizations; some groups need information, while others can be mobilized to collect and analyze data. Organizers and workers have access to an expanding variety of tools that can be helpful to navigate most of the problems organizers face: defining communities of interest, reaching them, finding and developing leaders within them, building

trust and solidarity among members and generalizing expertise and good judgment among them, influencing public debate by collecting reliable and legitimate data on the costs or benefits of alternative public or private arrangements and, of course, finding new members, testing the effects of different messages on them, and involving them, too, in decision making and the iterative adjustment of strategy. All this, on balance, is good for the cause of effective worker organizing.

Of course, their opponents have access to the same tools, and more, to undo any emerging collectivity, sow the seeds of distrust, manipulate the more general space

of public debate and foster effective suppression of alternatives, in which these workers are living.

So, once more, digital strategies and tools for worker organizing are interesting and promising, and should be developed better and more mindfully by their funders than they are now. But they are hardly a panacea. They alone cannot build worker voice and power. Organizers seeking to utilize these strategies and tools should consider their organizing objectives, delineate where offline and online strategies might be complementary, and make decisions that carefully consider how a digital organizing strategy might further their work.

Endnotes

1 As we use the term, “digitalization” simply and broadly means the application of “digitization”—the conversion of analog source material to numeric format—to more areas of human activity. Along with “globalization”—by which we mean, again simply and broadly, the increased flow, integration and influence of people, money, goods and services and, inevitably, cultural norms and expectation across national borders—we take such digitalization to be one of two defining material circumstances of our time.

2 This scan, commissioned by LIFT, originally was undertaken as intended background for a meeting of those in the field that never took place. We finished it out because we’d promised to do so, because we ourselves are dimly interested in developments in the field, and in the hope that it informs future discussion among those who share that interest.

3 Some of these were raised in previous scans of this world. See in particular the “Field Scan of Civic Technology” for Living Cities (2012), “Future of Progressive Technology Study” for the Ford Foundation (2014) and “The Digital Culture Shift: From Power to Scale” by the Center for Media Justice (2015).

4 Distributed and decentralized organizing don’t necessarily overlap. For example, a decentralized campaign can rely on paid staff for organizing, and oligarchic organizations often distribute tasks.



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